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## THE 14-KARAT TRAILER



The true, authentic and hilarious account of the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of a man who built a 14-KARAT TRAILER which he called *The Continental Clipper*—and which his friends called *The White Elephant on Wheels*. With log-book entries and decorations by Harry Hershfield, Tony Sarg, Otto Soglow, Russell Patterson and Rube Goldberg.

# THE 14-KARAT TRAILER

By Myron Zobel

NEW YORK: FREDERICK FELL, INC., PUBLISHERS

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PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY IN CANADA BY  
GEORGE J. MCLEOD, LTD., TORONTO

To  
My Wife Pat



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Prologue

## MIDNIGHT ON TENTH AVENUE

**I**T WAS just a shabby used car lot over on Tenth Avenue. Long solemn rows of "guaranteed bargains" stood out like wrecked and abandoned jalopies in the intermittent flashes of garish green neon light that spelled out the proprietor's proud slogan: "*If It Has Wheels I Sell It—The Grinning Greek.*"

Against this sombre background a lively tableau was unfolding. It was a christening. The glare of exploding flash bulbs revealed an enormous trailer, the streamlines of her sleek dove-grey body blending smoothly into the sophisticated curves of the cab-over-engine truck to which she was attached. Against the nose of the trailer a tall, beautiful blonde was smashing a magnum of champagne.

"I christen thee 'Continental Clipper'!" she exclaimed, breaking the neck of the bottle gingerly in order not to damage the expensive hand-hammered body. Then, with the remains of the half-empty bottle, she stepped into the interior of the Clipper, followed by a small group of friends.

The interior was paneled with Australian satinwood and figured aspen and the walls were of tufted pigskin. The indirect lighting cast a soft glow over the hand-blocked linen chairs and couch. At the forward end was a tiny bar and wine cellar and a desk with radio-telephone. Marine stairs led to the flying bridge observation lounge with its duplicate dashboard of speedometer and gauges.

The truck, designed to pull the Clipper, had a bed for the relief driver, six forward speeds and a large generator for lights, heat and air conditioning, plus a small motor scooter to serve as a dinghy.

In contrast to the owners and guests who were in evening dress, for the time was nearly midnight, the two Greyhound drivers in the truck wore coveralls and sat in their cab-over-engine contentedly munching sandwiches and tossing the crusts, together with their Coca Cola bottles, into the path of the late arrivals.

Inside were other hazards. Horace, the steward, had put the capers on the caviar instead of on the smoked salmon (a bon voyage gift from Sherman Billingsley of the *Stork Club*) and spilled the caper oil down the front of his dove-grey uniform, made to match the Clipper's exterior trim.

My wife, Pat, and I had rented the used car lot and ar-

ranged this party as a fitting introduction to our friends of the newly completed Clipper.

To me it was a semi-sacred occasion, halfway between an Elsa Maxwell party and a pilgrimage to Mecca. Comments by the guests ranged, in my opinion, from senile to puerile.

"You could put a saddle on it and run it in the Kentucky Derby."

"As a matter of fact," my wife, Pat, explained, "Myron is taking it to the Derby. I'm not invited. It's a stag party."

Trudi Mercier of *Life* nearly spilled her drink in excitement.

"What a story! Can we send a photographer along—a man, of course—to do "*Life* goes to the Derby on the Continental Clipper?"

I nodded my head modestly. As an advertising man, publicity never nauseated me.

Trudi continued, "How did you ever dream up this——this incredible——*thing?*"

"That's a long story, Trudi," I began. Just then a whistle blew. From her dock a block away the Queen Mary was preparing to sail at midnight.

The inter-com phone rang and Popp, one of the Greyhound drivers, reminded me, "You should ought to give them guys and dolls the brush-off if you still plan to pull her out at midnight."

"Roger and over," I replied, making a circle with my thumb and index finger as I had seen pilots do in the movies.

"Sorry, folks," I apologized, "the party's over. We sail for Palm Beach in five minutes."

Glass in hand, everybody rushed for the door. As Cholly Knickerbocker put it in his column next day: "Instead of the guests leaving the party early, the party left the guests."

When all visitors were ashore, the Clipper pulled out of the lot. Pat and I sat by the open flying bridge window as our guests raised their drinks in "Bon voyage."

"Hell's bells!" cried Pat, "we left our monogrammed glasses."

"Can't stop for them now," I replied firmly. "We're one minute behind schedule as it is."

The voice of Trudi rose in a shriek over the quiet midnight. "Don't forget that story. *Life* will eat it up!"

I yelled: "I'll write a book about it."

And I did.



Book One

ELEPHANTS NEVER FORGET

REMARKS



[From the Guest Register]

TONY SARG





## Chapter 1

### BIRTH OF THE DREAM BOAT

**I** HAVE always been a victim of my imagination. As an advertising man, imagination served me well when I turned it on my prospects. But this is the story of how it backfired.

Being a man of impulse, ideas strike me suddenly and with great impact: my pulse begins to quicken, I get a dizzy feeling and lightning seems to shoot out of my fingertips.

That is how it was when this story began: Pat and I were taking a motor trip across Highway 66 in our new Cord. On our way west we planned to see the Painted Desert. As usual, my imagination ran faster than the Cord. I had visualized a pleasant, leisurely trip, dining

enroute in colorful restaurants famous for their regional dishes, sleeping in modern resort hotels whose air-conditioned rooms would look out over scenes as picturesque as the travel folders.

The facts were different. The food was miserable, the accommodations worse. It was so hot in Arizona that we loaded the Cord with dry ice and even tried driving all night. Nothing helped.

Finally we settled for a bucket with a large lump of ice and towels which Pat soaked and held on my head as I drove.

It was only 5 A.M. and the sun was just rising.

"How can it get this hot so early?" asked Pat.

"That's easy," I replied testily. "It's still hot from yesterday."

The melted ice from the cold compress dripping down my forehead blurred my glasses. Pat pulled them off and started to search for a dry tissue.

"Can you see to drive without your glasses?" she asked, continuing her hunt through the glove compartment while I steered where I thought the road should be.

"Oh, perfectly. I just wear them for adornment!"

We struggled on.

The dream of a well-mixed dry martini before a decent dinner in an air-conditioned restaurant became an obsession. We hoped we had shoved aside our last greasy hamburger. It was in this frame of mind that we arrived at Adamana, Arizona.

"Well, where is it?" I asked truculently.

"Where's what?" Pat wanted to know.



"The Painted Desert, of course."

"Right there, I guess."

I squinted, but the setting sun was in my eyes, and all I could see was an assortment of dirty browns.

"Everything will look better in the morning," Pat said consolingly. "Come on. Let's find the Lodge. I need food—and a bath!"

"The Lodge is probably in the center of town," I announced, starting to turn the Cord.

"This, my love, is the center of town." Pat pointed. "See!" Directly in front of us was a little row of huts that looked like outhouses, in the middle of which was a two-family unit with the sign "Pete's Grill and Cabins—Good eats."

Pete himself, an Indian with a bored, inscrutable face, showed us to our "cabin." It contained two wooden bunks covered with straw, one chair and a small table with cracked bowl and ewer.

Pat asked, "And where's the shower?"

"No shower," the dead-pan owner replied. "Indians use sand."

That night, as I lay tossing on my straw mattress covered only by a tattered Indian blanket, I conceived the plan which was to catapult us into three of the most maddening, frustrating, exciting years of our lives. Auto travel, I decided, was way behind the times. Why not build a trailer? Put every creature comfort in it. How I had longed for an iced glass of beer all the way across Kansas! How I longed right now for a good bed and a bath! Why, a man could have a Beautyrest mattress, an icebox,

a stove, a bar, a shower, maybe even a small air-conditioning unit in his own trailer. Then he could travel in comfort to the four corners of the continent.

Of course, a trailer might be expensive, cost as much as \$2,500. But it would be worth it.

We suffered all the way out to the coast, and back as far as Chicago. By that time I had completely forgotten my plans for revolutionizing American travel.

"Thank heavens," Pat said the first morning in Chicago, as she unpacked and started steaming her dresses, "that you dropped that nutty idea you had for buying a trailer. Why, by now . . ."

Her final words were lost in the steam from the bathroom. But I had heard enough to start again that creative tingling in my fingertips as I closed the door softly and headed for the newsstand.

"Got any trailer magazines?" I asked. The man behind the counter handed me *Trailer Topics*.

"Chicago," it said in its lead editorial, "has become the epi-center of the Trailer Universe." That settled it. I decided to take a look at the epi-center and ten minutes later had parked the Cord facing a whole block of trailer showrooms.

But the trailers were far from the luxury liner I had dreamed up. They looked like piano boxes on wheels. They had no Beautyrests, no showers, no iceboxes. They were not even designed to ride in while in motion.

I consulted *Trailer Topics* and decided to seek out one Wilbur Schult of Elkhart, Indiana, whose ad proclaimed him the best in the business.

Meanwhile I remembered my original promise to give Pat her first glimpse of the trailer and try at least one ride before buying. So I rented a new "deluxe model" and a car to pull it. The trailer salesman had taken one amazed look at the parked Cord and waved it aside with a lofty gesture.

"Can't pull it with that thing. Too fancy. No place to put a hitch."

"Then I'll need another driver—for the Cord."

"Why? You drove it in here."

"Because my wife and I are going to sit in the trailer while it's being dragged along. Just to see what it rides like."

The salesman looked at me as if I had suggested re-enacting the ride of Lady Godiva.

"Okay, but you ain't gonna like it!"

I bought Pat several rounds of very dry martinis before lunch. They had the desired effect.

"Well," she said contentedly, "it's a relief to be unpacked for a change. And I've sent out all the laundry and cleaning." Just as she was starting her seafood cocktail I sprang my little surprise. "Too bad you sent the laundry out."

"What's too bad about it?"

"You'll have to get it back. I've made some plans."

Pat choked on an oyster—a difficult thing to do.

"Yes," I added brightly, "it's all arranged."

"What's all arranged?" Pat demanded, dropping her oyster fork. "Myron, you didn't!"

"No, of course, I didn't." I thumped her back reassuringly until she recovered full power of speech.

"The trailer," she moaned. "I know, don't tell me. You've bought a trailer with——with gold-plated plumbing fixtures and——and a bar and grill inside, and——and we're leaving for the North Pole in the morning."

"No, I did *not* buy a trailer and we are *not* leaving for the North Pole in the morning. I rented one and we're leaving for Elkhart—tonight."

In one convulsive gulp Pat finished her martini.

"Now I suppose you want me to go shopping for linens and silver. And, of course, you'd like them all this afternoon—with monograms on."

"Never mind the monograms."





## Chapter 2

### ROAD TEST

**W**HAT I HAVE IN MIND," I explained to the driver of the tow car, "is a sort of one man General Motors proving ground. I want to make this a real road test, simulating actual driving conditions as closely as you can. Understand?"

The driver of the tow car was the son of the salesman who had warned me about this ride. His voice, when he replied, had the same Cassandra quality. "I understand *perfectly!*" He seemed to put unnecessary emphasis into those three words.

The ensuing ride was one of the most hair-raising in the history of locomotion. The deluxe model's interior appeared to have been designed for a family of midgets. It

was difficult enough to sit down in those two canvas folding chairs; to stand up, except with head bowed in an attitude of reverence and knees bent in a gesture of curtsy, was impossible.

The supplies Pat had purchased we piled in the middle of the linoleum floor, but they skidded with each movement of the trailer. When we slowed down, they flew forward beneath the cotton valance of the davenport. When we speeded up, they lurched back to their favorite resting place between our feet.

In addition to the pitching motion there were sidewise and rolling motions. There were also spine-twisting, diagonal motions when it seemed as if the deluxe model was trying to unwind itself like a spring. Every time the driver applied the brakes we clung to our canvas chairs with our knees and braced our hands against walls which were within easy reach.

"It's like horseback riding," Pat explained. "When you post you cling with your knees." The trailer lurched. "Only what this horse needs are a couple of pommels."

"Try riding side-saddle," I exclaimed bitterly. Pat turned her canvas chair and at the next curve fell forward against the wall.

"Any other bright ideas?" she inquired with feeling.

We continued to joggle and jounce till our insides felt homogenized. As Pat's purchases skidded into new kaleidoscopic arrangements, I spied a package of interesting shape and grabbed before it got away.

"Martinis," I exclaimed joyfully, sampling the contents and passing the bottle of ready-mixed cocktails to Pat.

"I know you always mix them yourself. And I know they should never be shaken. But I thought just this one time——"

"Quite right," I agreed, repossessing the bottle. "There are exceptions to everything."

The trailer by now, looked like a giant cocktail shaker and we the contents, enthroned like gypsy royalty among the debris. As Pat stooped to pick up some bits of broken Coca Cola bottles the enormity of it all swept over her. "Myron," she shouted above the crash and grinding of the passing traffic and the rattling, bumping and thumping of the trailer, "don't you adore this! Such sophistication! Such comfort! And to think you planned it all yourself. At last, we're really living."

Sometimes I wonder whether a man is wise to marry a wife with a sense of humor.

The rain began before we were halfway to Elkhart. The ventilators on the roof leaked right onto our chairs and the davenport. Our new sheets and pillow cases now skidded out from under them and got thoroughly soaked.

"Do you still plan to sleep in this thing?" Pat inquired, eying the soggy couch.

"I certainly do. I'm paying thirty-five dollars to road test this infernal machine. And that includes trying to simulate Pullman conditions."

"Then let's ring for the porter to make up the berth." Pat reached for the clothesline I had thoughtfully strung out the window and tied to the rear view mirror of the tow car.

"Don't pull that line!" I called sharply. "The idea is to see whether we can make up the bunk while the trailer's in motion."

"Yes, suh," Pat acquiesced.

I planted my feet as firmly as I could between the two canvas chairs and grabbed her waist in my arms. Pat picked up the damp sheets and I played her long, lithe body out over the davenport like a human firehose. After a few falls and abrasions the job was done. Pat fell exhausted on the rumpled bed and I sank heavily into the nearest chair. As if he had been waiting for us to finish our Procrustean labors the driver now pulled over to the curb and stopped.

The door opened. He stuck his quizzical face in at us. "I just wanted to be sure that you and Mrs. Zobel were comfortable."

"Quite," I announced in my best Machiavellian manner.

"Yeah. These deluxe jobs are a big improvement over the early models. Those old ones were hard to keep on the road. Used to bounce around a lot."

I couldn't seem to think of a suitable reply.

"I've stuck to the concrete highways so far," he continued, "but don't worry. You'll get the full treatment. I'll take to the cobblestones outside of South Bend."

"Thank you," I said. "That's very thoughtful."

He withdrew. The road test continued. Throughout most of that five-hour journey I scribbled notes in a lurching scrawl. Before dark I had nineteen pages of indignant comments along this line: "Need stabilizer . . .



this like being shot out of a cannon. Need windows in front . . . if accidents, want to see them happen." At last, exhausted, the pencil dropped from my cramped fingers and I fell back on the bed. I dozed off but I remember my dreams distinctly. I was driving the lead car in the Indianapolis speed classic. I kept banging my head against the cowl and my teeth rattled until I thought they would fall out. I could feel my neck snap. When I looked out at the screaming crowds I saw old Paris, during the Reign of Terror. I was in a tumbril jolting over its ancient cobblestones on my way to the guillotine.

I was awakened from my nightmares by Pat.

"Myron," she said ominously, "we're there."

"Where," I asked thickly, "at the Place de la Révolution?"

"No," she said comfortingly. "At the Schult plant, of course."

"Oh, my God."

Pat and I climbed out of our squirrel cage cautiously and felt for broken bones.

"Mr. Zobel," asked a voice from the tow car, "will you be wanting to make any more road tests tonight, sir?"

"No, thank you," I replied icily, "you are free to return this 'deluxe model' to your father—with my compliments."

The voice from the tow car had the last word.

"They're not made to *ride* in, you know. But they're just *swell* for camping."



### Chapter 3

## THE ARTICULATE ENGINEER

**P**AT AND I were recovering our land legs.

"Let's go," she said, as she started tottering toward the Cord.

"Go where?" I was already banging on the door of the Schult plant. "There's a light in there. Must be the night watchman."

"You don't want to see the night watchman," Pat reminded me with exasperation. "You want to see the president."

The door opened and I found myself peering into the face of a scholarly-looking young man in shirt sleeves.

"What's the trouble?" he inquired.

"Nothing's the trouble. I just want to build a trailer, that's all."

"In the middle of the night?"

"No, not in the middle of the night. I thought I'd find out what time Schult gets down in the morning."

"Oh," he said soothingly, as if that explained everything. "So, you want to build a trailer. What kind do you want to build?"

I told him.

"Well, come in," he said, his face lighting up. "You see, I've been trying to get Schult to let me fool around with something like that ever since I took this job six months ago."

"Oh, you're a——."

"Yes, I'm a designer." He led us into his little cubbyhole of an office. "The trouble is I don't get enough chance to design. If I had my way I'd put wings on these things."

By the time the young M.I.T. engineer and I had polished off what was left of my bottle of ready-mixed martinis, we had learned to speak the same language. At least I had.

"Not that the Standard Schult isn't a finely articulated product," he explained.

"Articulated?" My tone was vague.

"Well-engineered, right from the mock-up. Die formed over an underskin of hardboard with all joints shiplapped, glued and screwed to withstand torque and road shock."

"That's what we want," I agreed. "More torque and less road shock."

He reached for his drawing board and for an hour and

a half his imagination galloped. My ideas for the trailer seemed modest. I wanted something that would match the cream color of the Cord, a sleek streamliner with hot and cold running water, two or three comfortable beds, a nice bath and shower, a flush toilet, a complete kitchen, a bar and a living room with couch and chairs that didn't look like fugitives from a rundown hotel lobby. Also, we wanted air conditioning for summer, and heating for winter, and a "flying bridge" with large glass windows so we could look ahead and see where we were going.

"Mr. Zobel," he said, as I poured out the dregs of the bottle, "I congratulate you. I wouldn't tell this to Schult, but that flying bridge business is the only new idea anybody's come up with in the trailer field for the last five years."

I could feel the blood rushing to my head. I was like a boy who had just received the largest set of electric trains in the world. For one giddy moment I was certain that my ideas, "articulated" by this brilliant engineer, would rank with the discovery of the wheel and the bringing to man of fire by Prometheus.

"Myron, darling," I heard Pat's sleepy voice say, "don't you think you've had enough martinis for one night?"



## Book Two

THEY TAKE 18 MONTHS TO MAKE

DEAR  
MYMAN! B

FIGURE  
TESTS OUT  
FOR YOURSELF-  
IT IS  
REDUCING  
PAIN

# RUBE GOLDBERG





## Chapter 4

### MEETING OF THE OPTIMISTS

**I** NOW FOUND that what had begun as a sort of half-joke, half-gesture of defiance was on the verge of becoming a reality. And, as I walked through the Schult workshop in the clear light of the following morning, I was torn between the fear that my dream was not really going to come true and the fear that it was. But the smell of freshly sawed lumber and wet paint, the buzz of electric saws and the ring of hammers as I neared the front office at the end of the shed started again that old creative tingling in my fingertips.

Wilbur Schult was in his shirt sleeves working at a little desk by the window. He spotted me as soon as I came through the glass partition.

"Hello, Zobel," he shouted across the room. "You look just the way Fred described you."

He got up and hurried over, slapping me heartily on the back. "Fred told me all about your little midnight chat," he said. "That's quite some little houseboat you two dreamed up."

Schult's heartiness frightened me. Like all extroverts I shy away from someone more aggressive than I. Perhaps I had hoped Schult would throw cold water on my red-hot imagination and free me from this mad dream.

"I don't know," I hedged, "my ideas may be too far-fetched."

"Far-fetched? Far from it." Schult slapped the desk with the flat of his hand. "Why only yesterday at Rotary the boys were ribbing me for being too conservative. 'What you need, Wilbur, in that bicycle factory of yours,' they said, 'is to produce something sensational that will start the public talking about Elkhart and Schult.'"

He shook his finger under my nose for further emphasis. "And my advertising agent, MacDonald, says the same thing!"

Things were moving too fast, even for me. Everything was too pat, too easy. I remembered my plan to build the trailer for one-third in cash and two-thirds in advertising. Maybe this was a good time to bring up the due-bill.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Schult, there's one point that didn't come up in my talk with Fred last night and that is the question of payment."

Schult shrugged that aside as a matter of minor importance.



"Oh, we can take that up later."

"But you see," I persisted, "I'm in the advertising business. I sell space for a string of college magazines. I just happen to have a few of them here in my brief case." I laid copies of the Harvard, Yale and Princeton alumni weeklies on Schult's desk. He thumbed them through with relish.

"Look like good media. We've been planning a campaign in magazines. Mac ought to go for these."

This was my point of no return. Schult called over his chief engineer, a tense-looking, middle-aged man named Hatch. He proved considerably less headstrong than Fred; and my grandiose ideas began to undergo a little rude deflation. The "master bedroom" became part of the living room and the bathtub, in which Pat had already been mentally luxuriating, became a small shower. But he agreed that the trailer, which I had already named "Continental Clipper," was practical to build.

By noon Schult's desk was piled high with estimates, sketches, designs and supply house catalogues. And the accounting department, after a little fast figuring, had come up with \$5,000 as the probable cost of building the Clipper.

Schult took me to luncheon at the Optimist Club. MacDonald was there and agreed that the Graduate Group magazines were perfect for the Schult campaign, and the bargain was clinched on our way back to the factory. The Schult corporation agreed to take half the \$5,000 construction cost in advertising.

I spent that afternoon in a huddle with Hatch and

Fred. I was already beginning to see myself as a sort of dinner-jacketed Robinson Crusoe. In my enthusiasm I came up with a few additional ideas, including a fully equipped office and an air-conditioned wine cellar. By nightfall the arrangements were complete. Blueprints were to be forwarded for our approval the following week and construction to begin immediately thereafter.

We drove back to Greenwich, Connecticut, confident that within a month there would be delivered to our door a trailer of unparalleled elegance and efficiency.

One evening, about two weeks later, a special delivery letter arrived from Schult.

"I regret very much the delay in rendering you the blueprints which are enclosed herewith and which we just finished this afternoon but the work of designing your Clipper has turned out to be one of the doggonedest things we ever tackled here at the plant although I am sure when it is finished it will be really something.

"I am very sorry to relate to you that owing to lack of space in the interior of your Clipper it will not be possible to include the wine cellar as planned by you as the space will be required to store the 20 storage batteries you want for your 110 volt light system to prevent your having to run your generator at night.

"I also am very sorry to have to relate to you that the price which we discussed of \$5,000 is absolutely out of the question owing to all the extras which you added after lunch and you better prepare yourself right now that the cost of this thing will not be a penny under \$6,500 . . ."

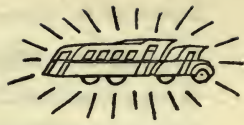
I hit the ceiling. Sixty-five hundred dollars and I don't even get a wine-cellar!

Then we spread out the blueprints. They were large,

impressive affairs. They showed the interior and the front, rear and side elevations of a conveyance of such dazzling splendor that we both gasped. There was the flying bridge. There were the words CONTINENTAL CLIPPER smartly lettered on the sides. There were the pennants Pat had designed, in their jackstuffs at the helm, whipping proudly in the artificial breeze. But what particularly caught our eyes was a little panel framed in the lower right hand corner of each of the blueprints. It read: "Design for Mr. and Mrs. Myron Zobel's Land Yacht."

Land yacht!

The effect of this phrasing was intoxicating. To own a super trailer was wonderful enough; but to design and be skipper of your own land yacht; that, to use Schult's expression, was "really something." It seemed to ease the pain a little of the \$1,500 raise in price.



## Chapter 5

### PADDED PIGSKIN

**P**AT HAD the blueprints of the interior spread wide open on the floor of our living room.

"One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five . . . six . . . seven." She counted slowly aloud as she paced off the apartment from wall to wall.

"Seven times three," she figured to herself. "Seven down and carry the one. That's only seventeen feet." She turned to me as if she had just solved Einstein's Law of the Expanding Universe. "Why this living room is smaller than the trailer."

"Probably, with the kind of strides you're taking."

Pat ignored my comment and turned to Horace, our man-of-all-work.



"Horace, you take one end of that couch and Myron, you take the other." We snapped to it. She had that gleam in her eyes that women get when they are rearranging furniture. She was using her Meeting-of-the-Board-voice.

"Put it right beside the windows. Now put those two chairs over here, facing one another, and that card table in between. That's where the dinette is going to be. And that," she pointed to the rear wall of the living room, "is the kitchen."

"Galley," I corrected.

"Now there is where I want the dresser and long cedar-lined closets for my evening clothes."

Horace and I placed two piles of books to mark the spots.

"The bar can go in front."

"Up forward," I explained.

"And here," she moved the kitchen stepladder into place, "is where the stairs will go to the mezzanine lounge."

"The flying bridge," I muttered under my breath.

Pat sat down on the pile of books that marked the cedar closet and surveyed her handiwork.

"Over there in the corner," I indicated the only unoccupied spot, "I'd like to put my desk and office materials."

"Maybe," Pat admitted reluctantly, "if I don't need it for extra closets." She glanced about our living room which measured sixteen feet by twenty. "You know," she said, "it's going to be quite roomy."

"It ought to be. Your width is twice the legal limit."

Horace and I moved the stepladder and the couch and the bath stool (which was standing in for the shower) about eight feet in from the wall.

Pat was horrified. "Is *that* the way it's going to look? Why there's hardly room to squeeze down the middle!"

As soon as it became known that we were really going ahead with "Myron's crazy idea" everybody tried to get into the act. The most helpful were Pat's sister Frankie, of *Harper's Bazaar*, and her tall, comical husband, George, of the custom design department of W. & J. Sloane. Every weekend our little Greenwich apartment looked like an interior decorator's shop during a rummage sale. Frankie would arrive with armfuls of swatches and bolts of hand-blocked linens. George brought sample books of plywood and of leather and leatherette.

"I think the walls might be done in pigskin," Frankie suggested. "It would give the Clipper a warm but business-like look."

"Yes," I agreed, "and the pigskin should be padded in case we get bounced around like we did on our road test to Elkhart."

"You could quilt it," Frankie suggested. "Quilt it in large diagonals stitched in a contrasting color. The quilted diamond shapes will throw interesting highlights and make it look like a plush movie set."

"Make it look like a padded cell in a nut house," George added ironically. "Strictly from fruit cake. Very appropriate. Like mood music."



"I like the idea of the contrasting stitching," Pat admitted. "Could it be stitched in cross-hatch to stand out more?"

"Entirely a matter of taste," George explained, "cross-hatch or booby hatch."

I was going through the book of plywood samples. How rich they would look as a paneled ceiling and as a dado below the tufted pigskin walls. Their very names were romantic. "Australian Harewood", "Gnarled Oak", "Figured Aspen", "Knotty Pine", "Circassian Walnut."

From his six-foot-four-inch height George's bald head looked down at me.

"What's it to be?" he inquired. "The Bastard Birch or the Tortured Eucalyptus?"

My small office staff also took a deep personal interest in the construction of the Clipper. Miss Edith Freeman, my secretary for fourteen years, had been through things like this with me before. On those rare occasions when I was not involved with the Clipper and had time to come down to the office I found my desk neatly piled with her clippings and memoranda. The gadgets and devices she brought to my attention I invariably bought: cigarette containers which proffered their contents ready-lighted and half-smoked; collapsible canvas porches with supports that folded into little duffel bags; highball glasses swiveled in double gimbals that would roll with the punches no matter what snakelike wriggles the Clipper might unwind.

I could see the precise, statistical stare of Mr. Immergut following me as I gloated over Miss Freeman's "finds."

"You're going to ruin yourself with that trailer, Mr. Zobel," he announced ominously as he laid before me the big accountant's ledger with its exquisite Spencerian entries of all my Clipper expenditures. He pointed a bony finger at the total, entered in red ink.

"If you had bought that used Greyhound bus as I suggested, you would now have a practical, well-engineered vehicle for half the money you have spent already." He paused to let his words sink in. "And Mrs. Zobel could have dolled it up to her heart's content."

Mr. Immergut had studied engineering as well as accountancy and he was undoubtedly right. People like that always are.

I glanced at the red total out of the corner of my eye.

"Why is the total in red?" I asked him.

That was the gambit Mr. Immergut had been waiting for.

"Because there's no resale value. Now if you'd bought a Greyhound——"

"But a Greyhound has no flying bridge. And you can't expect all of us—Horace and the driver and my wife and myself—to live together in one room."

I saw that Mr. Immergut was not impressed. "No resale value," he repeated sadly. Then his face brightened. "Maybe when you get sick of it and sell it for junk I can charge it up to Capital Loss or Business Expense and try for a tax deduction."

It was incredible. Before I even had it built he had it in the junkyard. I seemed to see Mr. Immergut in a new light. People who are always worrying about resale values must get mighty little fun out of life.



## Chapter 6

### SHIP-TO-SHORE

**I** WAS SORELY TRIED when word of what I was up to got out among my friends and clients. At first the Clipper was accepted in fairly good grace as the eccentricity of an advertising man. But when they heard about the tufted pigskin walls and the air-conditioned wine cellar they thought I was out of my mind and made no bones about saying so. Some inquired waggishly if I was planning to include a built-in bowling alley or perhaps a swimming pool or a ski jump on the roof. I was generally regarded as a lunatic-at-large and suggestions were made that I be put away in the booby hatch. Some of my friends offered sympathy to Pat. And all of them enthusiastically embroidered the theme until finally the Clipper was ru-



mored to cost \$100,000 and to be built in three sections, each sixty-five feet long.

I didn't mind being stopped on the street by friends who asked me, "Well, how is the Colossus of Roads?" I tried to smile appreciatively, though I'd heard the gag before. I even laughed out loud at a cocktail party when I overheard some wit inquire: "Have you heard the latest exploit of Global Zobel? He's crossing a Greyhound bus with Madison Square Garden. He expects to get diesel locomotives as pups." But when I heard it bandied about that the Clipper would contain a sunken bathtub and a gold lamé telephone, I was furious. Sunken bathtub. How absurd! But a *telephone*. Why hadn't I thought of that myself!

I lost no time in calling the business office of the telephone company and the following conversation ensued.

"I want one of those radio phones you use to talk with while you're in motion."

"One moment, pulee-us. I will connect you with the marine operator."

She connected me and I repeated my request.

"What's the name of your yacht?" asked the voice at the other end.

"The Continental Clipper."

"How far off shore do you expect to operate it?"

"Right on shore, I hope."

"What is your home port going to be?"

"Greenwich, Connecticut."

"And where do you plan to moor your yacht?"

"In the Greenwich Garage."



There was a brief pause while the marine operator consulted with her chief. Then I heard a new voice.

"This is the supervisor speaking. Just what type of boat do you own?"

"I don't own any type of boat."

"Well, just what *do* you own?"

"I own a trailer."

Another pause followed and a new voice.

"This is the Chief Engineer speaking."

I repeated my request for the third time.

"But you can't have a ship-to-shore phone if you don't have a ship," he said, speaking slowly and soothingly, as to an unruly child. "Why don't you just stop your trailer and get out and use a pay phone?"

"Oh," I sighed in desperation, "you wouldn't understand. That would be too easy."

From an amateur radio magazine I learned later that a mobile "ham rig" would enable me to talk almost anywhere in the world. I thought I'd just telephone down to a radio shop and have them send one up. But the "ham rigs" of those days had to be built to order. And even if I had one built into the Clipper the government would not let me use it. I would need a license to operate my own station; and a license usually meant a year's hard study to pass the Federal Communications Commission examination.

These obstacles, of course, made the radio telephone more desirable than ever. I had learned the Morse tele-

graph code when I was twelve years old and built my own primitive "wireless telegraph" spark transmitter, so I imagined that the license would be easy to earn. Then I found that the old Morse code had been supplanted by International Morse for radio and very appropriately renamed "The Continental."

I spent weeks cramming the Continental Code and haltingly tapping out messages with any instrument that presented itself. Sending was easy; it was learning to receive that was hard. Even at mealtime my studies continued, with Pat, as usual, in the pitcher's box.

"--. .- .-" Pat tapped out as we sat at a little table in the downstairs dining room of 21.

"G-u-i-n-e-a H-e-n," I spelled her dots and dashes out correctly.

The sharp rap of Pat's spoon on her half-filled water glass brought a waiter to our table.

"Did Madam call?"

"No." Pat continued her staccato rapping. "I'm just transmitting."

"Does Madam care to order now?"

"I *am* ordering."

"My wife wants Guinea Hen Smitaine," I translated for the waiter, "and I'll take the same."

"Does Madam wish vegetables with the Guinea Hen?" the waiter asked.

Pat consulted the large hand-written menu while the waiter stood with pad and pencil poised.

"A-s-p-a-r-a-g-u-s," Pat tapped out.

I gave it to the waiter as I got it, a letter at a time.

"H-o-t or c-o-l-d?" the waiter inquired, spelling the question out.

".... --- --"

"Hot," I translated.

The waiter acknowledged our order with a respectful nod.

When my code speed had reached the requisite thirteen words per minute I tackled Basic Transmitter Theory. I didn't remember anything like that when I was twelve years old. Now I was obliged to read schematic diagrams (the ham's equivalent of Egyptian hieroglyphics) and understand Ohm's Law. What a law! I was in favor of having it repealed. By this time the radio supply houses had gotten wind of what was going on and one of them called up and invited me to attend an Annual Field Day Outing.

The Outing took place Sunday in the wilds of Brooklyn; and, as I have never been able to find my way through Brooklyn without a guide, I was picked up in lower Manhattan in front of the Brooklyn Bridge. The party of hams who met me had a car with a whip antenna on the rear bumper and an instrument panel with a microphone and gleaming electronic gadgets. It looked like a police prowler car.

As we drove through the business section of Brooklyn, directions kept coming in over the loudspeaker:

"When you pass Nedick's orange stand opposite Woolworth's turn to your right."



Five minutes later our driver grabbed for the mike: "Calling the Mobile Net. We're approaching Greenwood Cemetery. What do we do now?"

I expected to hear the loudspeaker reply, "Drop dead!" But it didn't.

"Take the road to the left," the speaker spoke, "and follow the trail of white flour all the way up the hill. Over and out."

We turned to the left. The spoor of flour spilled as a guide led us a zigzag route to the southernmost extremity of Brooklyn, overlooking New York Bay. As we approached the Ridgewood Reservoir and Prospect Park, other cars, equipped like ours, joined the pilgrimage. A steady chatter of radio cross-talk flew from car to car till we reached the Field Day encampment which was in the highest part of the city. In the center of a circle of tents a large portable generator was churning out current. Intense groups of amateurs with assorted radio gear were already in contact with other amateurs throughout the world. Antennas of every type were rigged about the field; and the parked cars, each with its whip antenna, looked like a small stand of saplings in the distance. At one end of a long pine table, piled with sandwiches, stood a large barrel. A tall, stoop-shouldered ham in dirty dungarees was drawing the beer with professional skill. He had bloodshot, sleepy eyes and a two-days' growth of beard.

"One for you and one for me," he said, as the hams lined up with their Lily cups. He filled the first cup and

took one for himself. Drinking it quickly, he filled the next ham's cup and drew himself another.

"That's Butch," the ham who brought me announced with pride. "He's the guy you want to meet—a whiz at mobiles." With awe I regarded the young Steinmetz. When we reached the front of the line, Butch filled our Lily cups and his own, and I was introduced.

"Butch," my companion explained, "this guy's building a trailer, big as a house and twice as expensive. He wants a mobile station to match. You know, all the trimmings. Think you could fix him up?"

"Can do," said Butch, without lifting his lips from the foam.

"Better give him maximum power—a full gallon. That's 1,000 watts," he explained to me, "all the law allows." He winked broadly at Butch. "This guy wants the works. Get it? So don't spare the horses."

Butch wiped the foam from his lips with the back of his hand.

"Can do."

That was how I met Butch, the radio whiz, whose shenanigans were to haunt me for months to come. I agreed to pay all his expenses to Elkhart and back and an hourly wage plus a commission on all parts purchased. Butch knew a good thing when he saw it and soon the store room of my little office was piled high with enough radio gear to build a dozen mobile stations.





## Chapter 7

### PROGRESS REPORT

**M**Y PHONE CALLS to Elkhart kept growing longer and longer. I had agreed to the \$1,500 raise in price on condition that Schult squeeze in the air-conditioned wine cellar. But as work progressed I discovered that other compromises had to be made; and compromise is a word that does not exist in my vocabulary. Presently I found myself phoning Elkhart daily. The estimated weight had skyrocketed from five thousand to ten thousand pounds and that meant a heavier undercarriage, adding another \$500 to the price.

One day a collect call came in from Hatch and I knew from the strained sound of his voice that more trouble impended.

"I'm afraid you're going to have to scuttle that radio station," Hatch announced lugubriously. "I phoned Butch today and he thinks that it will weigh at least 1,000 pounds."

This was the last straw. I had spent weeks of study and passed my FCC exam, bought over two thousand dollars worth of the most expensive radio parts Butch could find and, by heavens, nobody was going to cheat me out of my mobile station! That phone conversation lasted nearly an hour; but I won out in the end.

Next morning our telephone bill arrived while Pat and I were at breakfast.

Pat dropped the bill as though it had burned her fingers.

"Wow! One hundred and seventy-three dollars and ninety-five cents. I told you it would be cheaper to go to Elkhart than to perch on that long distance wire all day like a magpie!" She shook her head. "What on earth do you find to talk about so long?" She read off the items: 'Elkhart \$4.95, Elkhart \$9.65, Elkhart \$11.25, Elkhart \$16.35.' And that's not counting the calls you probably made from the office."

"Here, let me see that thing a minute."

Pat handed me the bill with the tips of her fingers as though she hated to touch it.

Nearly every item was for long-distance calls or telegrams to Elkhart. I looked the bill over in detail, hoping to justify myself. At last I found one item.

"What's this: 'Westport, Connecticut'?"

"Oh, that's the call I made to my mother. I only talked three minutes. How much were the charges?"

"Forty-five cents. And that doesn't include the tax!"

Pat's suggestion, however, prevailed; and one icy-cold, blustery midwinter day we packed our bags again, loaded ourselves and Horace and Butch and as much radio gear as it could carry into the Cord and headed for Elkhart.

### HOTEL ELKHART

Elkhart's Finest  
Elkhart, Ind.

Dear Frankie:

We've been out here over a month now and as far as I can see nothing whatever has happened. We might just as well have stayed home. Of course Myron rushes out at dawn every morning and spends *all* his time at the Schult plant. He comes back late and exhausted and tells me how *awful* everything's going; but I honestly think he's enjoying himself. He has a glint in his eyes like he does when he's landing a new account.

Tonight Myron's out watching the Schult bowling team. You know how allergic he is to sports, especially bowling. But it seems Schult told him, "It's team work that counts." And the plant is bowling the finals tonight against Conn Band Instruments and Alka-Seltzer. I think Myron's afraid if he isn't there to cheer for the boys they won't give their all for the Clipper.

There are just two movies in Elkhart and they only change shows once a week. I've seen both of them through three times already, so now I've taken up sketching. I bought a child's box of water colors and I'm now doing my sixth layout of the trailer's interior. It's fun rearranging the furniture without having to lift anything. Also changing the color scheme of the upholstery. But we're still set on the padded pigskin walls—no matter what anyone says.

## Next day:

The Schult team lost and Myron says they won't get much work done this week. Everyone's so down in the mouth. Anyway, they have to tear the whole bottom out because Myron insists on taking a shower while the trailer's moving. Just for that they built in a copper tank to hold 70 gallons of water. But I think they forgot to figure the weight of the water. So now the trailer's going to be 15,000 pounds with nobody in it except the water. Hatch says that means everything will have to be made stronger, like brakes and things. Also heavier tandem wheels, whatever those are. I don't see how the poor Cord is ever going to pull it. It all seems too silly for words. I tried to talk Myron into just stopping the trailer and taking his showers while the trailer is standing still and he can hook up a hose to it, or a pipe, or something. But Myron says I don't get the idea at all. He says the trailer's got to be 'self-contained.' Sometimes it's hard for *me* to be self-contained when he gets that way.

## A week later:

Myron actually tore himself away from the Schult plant yesterday and Horace drove us to Chicago. Butch went along. He says that all the radio parts he bought in New York are no good and he has to buy new ones. While Myron and Butch spent the day in radio shops I went through Marshall Field's. Found an adorable little vacuum cleaner and some unbreakable plastic plates that look like wood. And I ordered a whole set of monogrammed glasses in every size. They have the trailer's pennants (the ones I designed) crossed like ship's flags and our initials in between. I also bought every thing electrical I could find. Like toasters, percolaters, waffle irons and electric blankets and things. I figured as long as Myron has that big generator and all those batteries for his radio I might as well put them to some sensible use. And I got a phonograph that changes records and just albums full of all the new recordings. Oh, and I ordered a tiny adorable rug with border to match the colors we're going to paint the trailer. They're sending a man over to measure because they are going to have to cut it to fit around all the furniture. I also bought six



little car-hop trays like they use in drive-ins. They'll hang right over the fancy aluminum rail Myron designed for the front of the mezzanine lounge.

Ten days later:

Horace has been acting funny lately. I thought it was because he has nothing to do except drive us to Chicago once in a while. But the waitress who serves our table says he's worried because he keeps getting letters from his wife threatening to sue him for desertion if he doesn't get home pretty soon. And the waitress says Butch told her he *never* expects to finish Myron's transmitter. He told her he just goes on buying new parts to keep Myron happy. Myron says that isn't so and that Butch is really an electrical genius.

Two days later:

The phone rang last night at about midnight while Myron was asleep and snoring from exhaustion. But he woke up and answered it. I was in the sitting room sketching and I listened on the extension. It was the house detective. He said Butch was run in for disturbing the peace and Myron better get dressed and go down and bail him out. Myron doesn't know I know this. He told me he just got up to go out for a little fresh air because he couldn't sleep. . . .

Pat's letter to Frankie was never finished and never mailed. Pat's letters seldom are. I found it when we moved out of the Hotel Elkhart in February.





## Chapter 8

### COMPOUND CURVES

**G**RADUALLY the Clipper began to take shape. But one by one the components of my dream were smashed. The bar and the wine cellar were in, but they measured only two feet across. The radio which Butch finally hay-wired together maintained a stony silence. And my office, which was crowded into the forward end of the Clipper, reduced the dining area to a space the size of a telephone booth.

Pat's first visit to the plant came when the Clipper was almost finished. She is allergic to the smell of turpentine; but she braved the fresh paint and varnish to see it. Her first concern was for the cedar-lined closets. She visualized them as full-length; but it didn't work out that way. The tandem wheels had been installed directly below the

spot she had chosen, so now a large semi-circular hump completely filled the bottom of each closet.

"They're too short," Pat complained when she saw them. "Where am I supposed to hang my evening dresses?"

"There's plenty of room left in the duffel bag we're stowing under the marine stairs."

"Do you expect me to roll up my new clothes in a ball with the dirty laundry?"

I changed to another subject.

"Well, anyway, we don't have to worry any more about the price and poundage going up."

"No?" asked Pat. "Why not?"

"Because the job is nearly finished and the cost and weight have leveled off."

"Where have they leveled off?"

"At twenty thousand."

"Twenty thousand what?" insisted Pat. "Dollars or pounds?"

"Both," I admitted reluctantly.

I was not the only one who aged during the building of the Clipper. Hatch's hair turned noticeably greyer during those winter months. He started muttering to himself. I knew that the soaring weight of the Clipper bothered him because his face twitched whenever that subject came up.

This time, however, he mentioned it himself. "About that Cord of yours. Seems a shame to spoil its lines with a hitch."

I nodded.

"Besides, it's going to be impossible to detach. With all that weight." He winced. "You might be wiser to leave the Cord as it is and get something else for a tow car."

"Something else?" I inquired, thinking of our lovely Cord and its gleaming exhaust pipes.

"Well, say a truck, for instance." He saw the expression on my face and hurried on. "Chevrolet's building a new cab-over-engine, a sweet looking job. I happened to talk about the Clipper and they said we could have the first one off the line. Good publicity, you know."

Hatch's way of putting it softened the blow. But it was up to me to break the news to Pat. I waited until the last moment, when she was happily arranging her purchases in the Clipper's gleaming interior. She was pleased with the outside also, now that the dove grey paint was on and the aluminum moldings striped in rich maroon.

"Looks like you were right about the Cord," I said casually. "Hatch says it won't pull the Clipper, after all."

"That's just swell! Now what are we supposed to do? Stay here in Elkhart and live in it?"

"Hatch has ordered a truck. It's due any minute." I led her to the window and pointed toward the loading yard. Just coming through the gates was our brand new cab-over-engine. The front view wasn't so bad, with its short hood and driver's cab shoved almost over the headlights. Only after we got the full profile did we realize what was about to happen to our beautiful Clipper.

Not that it wasn't a fine truck, worthy of pulling Amer-

ica's most beautiful land yacht. It was just that it looked like hell. Parked in front of the streamlined Clipper, it would stick out like an African head-hunter at the "Met." And how could we hope to sleep on our flying bridge, poised above the huge rear axle and grinding truck tires of this—this bulldozer.

"It's that darned self-contained shower of yours that's spoiled everything." Pat nearly sobbed in disappointment. "If it wasn't for all that water we have to carry around and those generators and batteries and radios we could use our beautiful Cord." I was almost inclined to agree with her.

She turned on poor Hatch with her eyes blazing. "It looks like a moving van!"

I felt sorry for Hatch who had done his best. "It may look like a moving van; but, at least, now it'll move," I said.

"Don't worry, Mrs. Zobel," Hatch reassured her. "I'm bringing down a crew of steel molders from Iron City, Michigan. Their specialty is hammering out bodies for cars. 'Mock-ups' they're called. Come around at midnight and you won't recognize your truck anymore."

"I hope not," said Pat.

Hatch was right. Pat stayed home; but I spent all that night in the plant watching the men from Iron City. There were five of them, all brothers. They were little men with large heads. They wore brown jumpers and looked like Brownies as they beat new life and beauty into our cab-over-engine with their ball peen hammers.



Huge chunks of the old offensive body were ripped off with blow torches and replaced with gleaming sheet aluminum. Under their blows the sheets flowed into shapes that blended with the streamlines of the Clipper. When their hammer marks were smoothed with abrasive, the flare of our truck was lovely to behold.

"They're good," I admitted to Hatch who watched beside me.

"They ought to be. Wait until you get their bill."

They were molding the new tail of the truck under the nose of the Clipper.

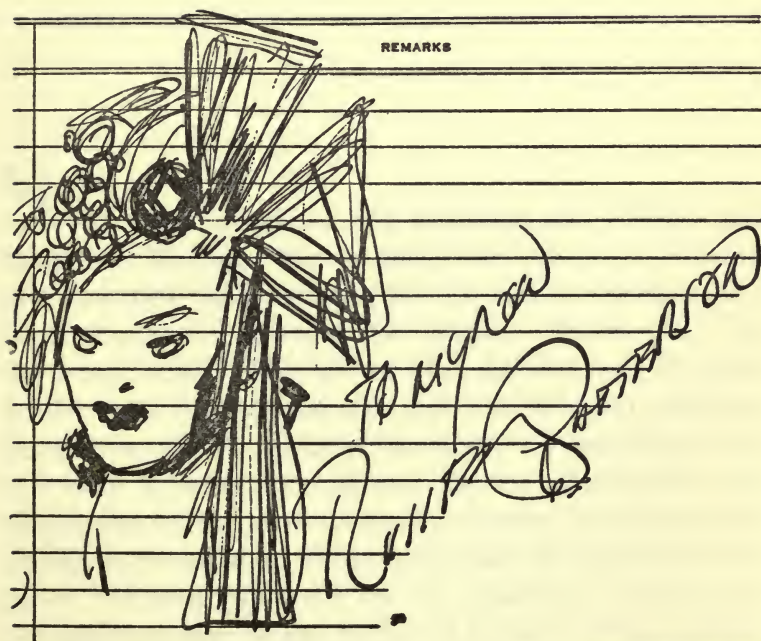
"What artists!" Hatch exclaimed, as they shaped the double curve. "Those compound curves are tough."

"I'll bet they are. Like compound fractures."

When the face-lifting was over, our rejuvenated truck went into the paint shed. By morning it was dove grey and striped in maroon to match the trailer. At last, the Continental Clipper was ready to hit the road.



Book Three  
PACHYDERM ON PARADE



[From the Guest Register]

RUSSELL PATTERSON





## Chapter 9

### SHAKE-UP CRUISE

**S**CHULT DID US PROUD the morning the Clipper was launched. No doubt he was glad to be rid of us. The yard was festooned with bunting and behind the loading platform streamers encircled the slogan: "Work and Play the Schult Way." The Lions, Elks, Rotary, and Optimist Clubs were represented and their shields and emblems hung from the platform as the prows of vanquished vessels once adorned the Roman Forum. Production was suspended for an hour while the workers, mindful of my cheers in the bowling alley, applauded all speeches to the echo. Pat reluctantly sat on the platform, wearing the corsages sent her by the Elkhart Chamber of Commerce. The society editor of the Elkhart *Truth* recorded the oc-

casion: "Mrs. Zobel, in a navy blue hand-stitched traveling suit from Paris, France, looked radiant as the chate-laine of the Continental Clipper, that exquisite product of Schult, Elkhart's world-renowned trailer designers."

Everyone but Pat made short, appropriate speeches. The shortest was by Butch. Out on parole, in the custody of the Chief of Police, he rose and remarked: "It was swell while it lasted."

Not since they unveiled the statue of Ulysses S. Grant in the Elkhart Park had there been such a to-do. When the last speech was over and the press photographers had finished with it, the Clipper was thrown open to the public. Gaping throngs tramped through its interior, ogling its hand-blocked linens, its Australian satinwood paneling, and its padded pigskin.

When the last visitor had left, Horace, resplendent in his new uniform and cap of dove grey and maroon, shouted, as I had taught him: "All ashore that's going ashore." And, accompanied by Schult, Hatch, and the press, we left on what Hatch called our 'shakedown' and Pat our 'shake-up' cruise. A capable driver for the truck had been supplied by Schult to take us to Detroit. Progress through the streets of Elkhart, I noted with satisfaction, was fairly smooth. At the city limits, where the crowds began to thin out, Schult and the press wished us godspeed and departed.

Only Hatch remained. The Clipper began to pick up speed. My sensations at this point were too delicious to describe. At last we were free; free to travel to the four corners of the continent, free from all the customary dis-



comforts of the road. No more lumpy beds, no more poor food, no more unreasonable Indians. I glowed with the thrill of creative accomplishment as I gazed down on the passing world from my exalted station on the flying bridge.

Oops!

The Clipper hit a rough section in the highway. I tried to ignore the jolts. The driver, back on concrete again, stepped up the speed from thirty-five . . . to forty . . . to forty-five miles per hour. The effect was not good; especially on the flying bridge over the rear axle of the truck. But I said nothing to Hatch who was busy amidship making notes. My determination that the Clipper should be everything I planned for it was such that if the rear end had dropped off I would hardly have noticed it.

Right over the Elkhart county line came the Clipper's first brush with a hostile world. Pat was in the rear galley helping Horace, so she was the first to see the traffic cops as they started after us from their ambush behind a highway signboard. Their sirens wailed as they flashed by beneath the flying bridge window and motioned imperiously to the driver of our cab-over-engine.

"Pull that thing over to the curb!"

I glanced up at the speedometer. We were only doing forty-five. The sign that hid the cops had said: "Speed limit—55 miles per hour. Beware, this highway is patrolled!" I braced myself against the tufted pigskin as the Clipper came to a fast stop and pulled over as directed. The two cops wheeled their motorcycles around the truck and racked them up so close to the Clipper's gleaming

sides that I was afraid they would scratch the fresh paint. The sourest looking of the two rapped on the door of the trailer. I rushed down the marine stairs and opened it.

"You didn't lose much time," I said, as he stepped aboard.

"We've been waiting for you to cross the county line," the cop said with a smirk.

"But the speed limit's fifty-five. We haven't exceeded that."

"It's not your speed. It's your 'over-all'."

"Our over-all what?"

"Over-all length, of course." He thumbed a small black manual and, pointing a grimy finger at a soiled page, shoved the book in my face.

"Section D, Subdivision 13B; Regulation 197: Over-all permitted length, measured from front bumper of tow car to rear bumper of trailer (or over-hang, whichever greater—43 feet."

"If this job ain't over forty-three feet, I'll eat that rule book," the cop said sourly.

"Prepare yourself for a bad case of indigestion," I warned him.

I turned to Hatch who sat cowering and pale in a corner of the couch. "Just reach me that tape measure," I asked him. "It's in the mirrored bookcase over your head." Hatch's hand trembled slightly as he handed it to me.

"Come on," I said to the traffic cop, "let's go." At the front of the truck I carefully marked, with the toe of my shoe in the soft shoulder of the road, a line even with the bumper. Then I handed the cop one end of the tape and

he hooked his little finger through the ring and toed my mark. He pulled the end of the tape hard against his chest so as not to lose a single inch of the penalty involved. Unwinding the tape slowly, I backed toward the rear of the Clipper. When I reached the trunk which hung three feet behind the rear bumper I pulled the tape taut and locked the handle. The other cop who had followed me now read the tape. "Forty-two feet, nine inches! I would have sworn this job was forty-five if it was a foot."

"Come back here," I called to the first cop, "and see for yourself." He dropped his end of the tape and started toward me.

"And bring that rule book," I added. "I have the salt."

When I had rewound my tape, I boarded the Clipper and we pulled out on the double. Pat and I stood at the galley window. The cops were leaning on their motorcycle saddles, scratching their heads. Hatch still sat on the couch. I think he was afraid to look. When we came back in the lounge, he was doodling dazedly in his notebook. There was a glazed look in his eyes and I noticed now that his hair had gone completely grey.

"Am I crazy or something?" he asked. "In all our blueprints the over-all length was forty-five feet, nine inches. That is, after we had to drop the Cord and change to the truck. By that time it was too late to do anything about it. I was hoping they wouldn't pick you up. Now," he shook his head, "I can't figure it at all."

"It's simple," I explained, pulling out the tape and handing it to him. He unwound it slowly checking each

inch. Then his eyes lit up. The first seven yards and the last seven yards were correctly marked; but I had cut out one whole yard in the middle.

After my successful encounter with the traffic cops, I felt confident that I could handle all the problems of trailer life as they came up.

This confidence was soon to be deflated.





Chapter 10  
MESS TIME

**I** HAVE DECIDED," Pat announced, as she got out the Jensen silver and the lace tablecloth, "that there will be no camping out on this trailer. We are going to live just the way we did in our apartment."

"O.K." I said, "you take charge of the mess; I'll be bartender."

"Make daiquiris," Pat ordered, "they go with the dinner I've planned. Horace has been cooking it for the last four hours." The sounds of slithering pans in the galley had indicated something big under way out there.

It was growing dark and I turned on the indirect lights. They cast a warm glow over the Australian satinwood and the padded pigskin, just as Frankie had said they would.

I opened the new bar's curved plywood door. The little refrigerator was churning away busily. Perhaps too busily; because the ice tray stuck when I tried to pull it out. I gave up my attempt at preparing the cocktails nonchalantly. I grabbed the handle of the ice tray with both hands. I braced my feet against the two-foot bar rail and leaned my whole weight back. A sudden forward spurt of the Clipper threw the full weight of truck, trailer and owner against that frozen tray. Something had to give. The tray came out and I fell back against the hollow arm of the sofa, tearing it off and spilling its stored cigarette cartons across the floor.

"That arm has to be removable," Hatch explained, as he helped me up, "otherwise, you couldn't make it up at night. I'll change the hooks in Detroit." He added another memo to the long list in his notebook. Somewhat shaken, I sat back in my swivel chair with the tray of ice cubes in my lap, and rang for Horace.

"Please hold this under the hot water and put the cubes in that thermos ice bucket Mrs. Zobel bought at Marshall Field's."

Hatch and I now got out the automatic ice crusher and fitted it over the socket screwed on the plywood bar wall.

When Horace returned with the thermos container I put in one ice cube. That was all it could hold. As soon as I started grinding, the whole gadget came off in my hand.

"Fasten socket with bolts and put steel plate behind," Hatch noted in his book.

"Wouldn't it be simpler to just crack the ice with a hammer?" Pat asked.

I gave her a frozen look and handed the crusher to Hatch, who held it firmly while I started to grind again on the handle. There was a crunching sound and the bottom fell off, spilling the crushed ice on the rug.

Pat grabbed the thermos bucket. Two minutes later when she returned from the galley the bucket was filled with cracked ice.

"Did you use the hammer?" I inquired bitterly.

"No."

"What did you use?"

"The heel of your shoe."

"Not the new pair from Lobb of London that Horace was boning?"

"I guess so. It worked swell."

I removed some specks of heel leather from the finished daiquiris before handing them to Pat and Hatch.

"Drink them fast," I advised. "We're coming to a curve." We downed the cocktails before they downed us.

"Dinner is served," Horace announced from the little dinette table. Pat took the seat facing forward. Hatch sat facing aft, with his back to the truck.

I extracted a bottle of sauterne from the wine cellar, along with my automatic cork extractor. Then I slid my swivel chair down the narrow aisle. When I was seated between Pat and Hatch, Horace staggered in with a large divided silver platter, swaying with the motion of the Clipper.

"I've skipped the first course to keep things simple," Pat explained as she served herself amply with hot fricas-

see chicken, mashed potatoes, stewed tomatoes and gravy. Hatch and I did the same.

When Horace brought in the opened bottle we lifted our first fork-full of food. That fricassee chicken, however, was not destined to be eaten, nor that wine to be drunk. We were passing through South Bend. With a screech of airbrakes, the driver pulled up for a stop light. The Clipper stopped; but our dinner kept on moving. Poor Hatch had chosen the wrong seat. Three plates full of hot fricassee chicken, potatoes, tomatoes and gravy landed in his lap. The sauterne followed.

That seat was known ever after as "the hot squat."

We averaged fifteen and a half miles per hour from Elkhart to Detroit and reached there just in time to catch the midnight train for New York. Hatch remained behind to supervise the "few minor adjustments" which were to be made there before the Clipper was delivered to us in Greenwich. During the entire trip to Detroit Hatch had discussed those "minor adjustments."

We were sitting on the flying bridge couch, munching the hamburgers Horace had made, following the fricassee fiasco. Hamburgers were to be our steady diet thereafter; and Horace, no short order cook by any means, got so that he could turn out a brace of them in thirty miles flat.

"How do you think she rides?" I asked Pat, as she jiggled gracefully up and down with the motion of the Clipper. Pat swallowed the last bite of hamburger on the up-bound before she answered.



"Like a truck," she said, choking slightly.

"Don't worry about that," Hatch explained, "I'm having egg-crate suspension installed in Detroit."

"Egg-crate suspension?" I asked blankly.

"It's a special device used in egg trucks. Guaranteed not to break an egg."

"I'll bet," Pat said. "And up here on this roost, I'll look like a setting hen on a nest."

To be perfectly honest, I had to admit that the shake-up cruise had revealed plenty of things which needed "minor adjustments." The air conditioner cooled the wine, but not the Clipper. The heater warmed the radiator, but not the passengers. You had to touch it with your hand to make sure it was working. The hot towel rack left our damp bath towels as moist as ever. And the fancy chrome pump handle on the marine toilet had a habit of coming off in your hand.

Our last view, as we boarded the train for New York, was of Hatch standing on the platform, adding more "minor adjustments" to the long list in his little notebook.



## Chapter 11

### TWO ON A DINGHY

**W**HILE HATCH remained in Detroit supervising his “minor adjustments,” Pat and I were busy in New York supervising some “minor adjustments” of our own. It had suddenly occurred to us that, except for the truck, the Clipper afforded no means of transportation. Unlike other trailers, we couldn’t just detach the tow car and use it when we had reached our destination. There were forty-eight wires between our truck and trailer, not to mention a special bronze alloy hitch and two sets of heavy emergency chains with steel links strong enough to shackle an elephant. Even if I had wanted to cavort around Palm Beach in our truck, with Pat beside me in the cab-over-

engine, I doubt if the job of decoupling could have been accomplished without a derrick.

"What we need for our land yacht," Pat advised, "is a lifeboat. And the place to get it is Abercrombie and Fitch."

When it comes to shopping I'll back my wife against the field. She has cased every store in New York City and points west with the thoroughness of a Macy comparative shopper in Gimbel's basement during a price war. So we headed for Forty-fifth Street and Madison and the justly famous A & F emporium of gadgets.

We confided our problem to a sympathetic door-man. "We have a land yacht," I explained, "and we need some sort of a dinghy."

He nodded understandingly. "Dinghies," he said, "are on the third floor."

When we stepped off the elevator we found ourselves in the boat department, surrounded by outboard motors, collapsible canoes and an absorbing collection of marine gadgets. Pat tugged gently at my arm. "No yachting caps." I left the swanky display with reluctance and walked over to the next counter. Pat shook her head. "No compasses." I tore myself away from the shiny brass binnacles and moved on. "Direction finders?" I asked her hopefully. "Might be useful if we lose our way." Pat ignored my plea and I glanced back sadly at the lovely rotating loop antennas.

"We want a lifeboat that runs on land," Pat was explaining to the department manager. I saw his puzzled look and added: "A sort of tender for our truck. You know, a dinghy with wheels or something."

A & F men are hard to stump. They have the answer to everything. "What you want," the manager explained, "is a scooter."

Pat and I looked at each other. "A scooter?" It sounded so childish. I remembered the one I got for my sixth birthday. It had one wheel in front and two in back and I stood on a little red platform and pushed it with my foot. The manager read my thoughts. "Wait until you see the scooters we build now. They do forty miles an hour."

He took us up to the top floor. There were the scooters, shiny and efficient looking. Those little two-cylinder contraptions were new in those days. I had never seen one and was enthralled. But they had only a single seat, shaped like a motorcycle saddle.

"We'll need two," Pat said, "one for each of us."

"There's only room to stow one in the truck, on the port side, next to the generators. The other marsupial pouch is filled," I reminded Pat. "Hatch built the driver's bunk in there."

"Why not add a rumble seat?" the manager suggested. "Put a steel brace over the rear wheel and another saddle on behind."

Pat looked at him. "The back seat, I suppose, is for me."

"You can drive if you want to, darling," I said reluctantly, recalling, with a shudder, Pat's punitive driving and the many lessons she had taught—with our fenders—to motorists who wouldn't pull over.

"Maybe Madam prefers 'back seat driving.'" The manager chuckled at his own wit. When he saw Pat's face he



hastened to add: "It will be quite comfortable, really. We'll put foot supports on both sides of the hub."

"You'd better check with my husband," Pat told him icily. "Perhaps he wants me to ride side-saddle."

That was how we came to acquire the dinghy. We promptly had it painted dove grey and striped in maroon. The panel in front was lettered CONTINENTAL CLIPPER, JR., and both seats were covered with tufted pigskin.

"The Clipper has to run on schedule," I said to Pat, "like a Greyhound."

"Why don't you get Greyhound drivers?" she suggested.

The personnel manager of Greyhound was skeptical when I called. He thought I was a competitor.

"What do you want Greyhound drivers for?"

"Because I want experts."

"What is your route?"

"No special route."

"Oh, a charter job."

"It's a private bus," I explained. "I travel in it with my wife."

"What for?"

"For fun—I hope."

That seemed to reassure him. "Winter is our dull season. I could let you have a couple of our best boys who are on furlough."

"That's swell. How much do I pay them?"

"Eight dollars a day each—and keeps."

"Keeps?"

"That's bed and board."

"I have the bed." To myself, I added, "It may feel like a board."

"Don't overlook the board," the manager warned me. "Greyhound drivers are good eaters." I found out later he wasn't kidding.

Justin Coyte and Burleigh Popp arrived at the Greenwich garage right after the Clipper was delivered. Coyte was tall and slender and had stiff blond hair that stood up like a crew-cut. He was from Quincey, Massachusetts and spoke with a cultivated New England voice. He was taking a correspondence course in the Elizabethan drama and he lost no chance for self-improvement.

Popp was different. He was short and stocky. While Coyte's speech had a faint Harvard tinge, Popp's was pure Brooklynesque. Popp was a diamond-in-the-rough. The rough was pretty obvious; but sometimes he sparkled with a certain brilliance.

Hatch had built the relief driver's bunk beside the generator in the cab of the truck. "It's the best-heated room in the Clipper," I told the drivers when I showed it to them.

"I'm sure it will be extremely comfortable," Coyte agreed, "with that reading light over the bed." He pointed it out to Popp. "And there is a bookshelf built into the door."

"That ain't no bookshelf," Popp replied, unlatching the cabinet. "That's for your spare undershoit. If you got one." Popp stuck his head further into the berth. "Now if there was only room for your feet, it would be poifict."

Coyte had climbed up onto the right front seat. He

pulled the back-rest out and unrolled the mattress. "Your feet go here, of course. And this curtain hangs over your legs and shuts out the windshield glare when you wish to sleep."

"Well," said Popp; "when I'm at the wheel and you climb into that boidcage with your feet sticking out on the seat beside me don't take your socks off!"

It was clear from Coyte's shocked expression that he found Popp's rough humor faintly indecent.

I left Popp and Coyte while they explored the cab-over-engine and familiarized themselves with the mechanical marvels of the Clipper. Watching them from the flying bridge, I saw Popp kicking the truck tires to check their pressure and examining the egg-crate suspension. When he reached the rear of the trailer, I heard something clatter to the ground and I craned my neck to see what it was. One of the painted metal shields that concealed the sides of the tandem wheels had fallen off. Popp's kick at the trailer tires had been too vigorous. Coyte refastened the panel while Popp continued his circular tour. There was another clatter and the shield on the other side fell off. While Coyte attached the second shield, Popp climbed into the cab-over-engine and I could hear him running the motor and checking the clutch, the gears and the air-brakes. When I thought his inspection was completed, I walked up to the truck. Popp had lifted the hood and was showing the motor to Coyte with what looked to me like obvious disdain.

"Well," I asked cheerfully, "all set for the big take-off for Palm Beach? You can drive her into New York tomor-

row and park her in the used car lot on Tenth Avenue at Twenty-fourth Street. We won't pull her out of there till midnight."

"It ought to be a pleasant trip," said Coyte. "Your rig is most impressive."

"And what do *you* think of the Clipper?" I asked Popp.

He sucked at his teeth. "Do you want I should tell you?"





## Chapter 12

CAUTION: DO NOT OVER-INFLATE

WE PULLED OUT of the parking lot at midnight, on schedule—at 12:01, to be precise. I was disappointed that the drivers wore coveralls over their Greyhound uniforms and had removed their shoulder patches, cap emblems and the lovely safety badges set with chips of ruby which had sparkled like illuminated “brag-rags” when I first saw them.

“Who’s driving?” I inquired over the intercom.

“Me,” said Popp.

“How’s Coyte doing?”

“He’s coiled up with a book back in his boidcage.”

Into the deserted streets of lower Manhattan and under the Hudson River through the Holland Tunnel, we

tore like mad. The whine of our ten tires ripped the still midnight as we rushed headlong down the U.S. Highway 1. Those Greyhound drivers certainly knew how to drive. They handled our ten tons like a baby carriage.

At last we were off—free as birds bound south for the winter. This was it. This was our reward for those long trying months. Even Horace caught the spirit of adventure. His customary dignity and deliberation lessened as he nimbly climbed the steep marine stairs that led to the flying bridge. He reached that perilous perch in the swaying Clipper and clung to the handrail. I read the speedometer as he started his tussle with our three-way couch. It showed fifty-five miles an hour.

I had designed that couch myself, and I was proud of it. The seat was adjustable. It faced forward and backward and flattened into a bed. In motion we sat looking ahead over the top of the cab-over-engine. When we parked we reversed the back. Then four could sit facing aft above the lounge of the Clipper. Blankets and pillows and cases and sheets, stowed inside, made up our double bed.

There was only one trouble. The couch, when opened flat, filled the entire flying bridge. Horace needed the skill of the daring young man on the flying trapeze to do the job.

"He looks like a Pullman porter who got stuck in an upper berth and is trying to make the bed up while he's in it," Pat whispered to me as we watched from the lounge. It took twenty-five miles by the speedometer from the time Horace tottered up the steps until he hung the green

curtain behind the rail that cut our sleeping quarters off from the lounge of the Clipper. When he had finished he withdrew. Behind the sliding galley door we could hear him at work on his own unique bed.

Sleeping Horace had been a tricky problem which Pat had solved.

"He can't sleep in the truck. And we don't want him sleeping in the lounge," she mused. "That's our guest room."

"That leaves the galley," I pointed out, "and there's no room there."

"There is, if you know how to manage. You just fit a flat metal cover over the sink. The gas stove has a cover already and so does the refrigerator." I looked at her. "Of course, you may have to put straps from the sink to the ceiling to keep him from falling off."

"But he can't sleep on the solid metal tops of the refrigerator, sink and stove. And there's no room to carry a mattress, not even a one-inch pad."

"We'll get an air mattress," Pat explained. "Frankie showed me one in *Harper's Bazaar*. Horace can blow it up every night. In the morning, when he lets the air out, you can fold it into a package no bigger than that," she held up her two hands three inches apart.

Two air mattresses were duly purchased before our departure. They were marked in large red letters: "CAUTION: DO NOT OVER-INFLATE." The label recommended lung power but allowed that a small hand pump might be used. "Pressure in no case must exceed twelve pounds," it warned.

The night before our departure we held a dress rehearsal, or rather, an undress rehearsal. Horace took off his uniform, so as not to spoil the knife-edge creases, and slipped into his working clothes. Then Pat and I watched him put the metal cover over the sink and attach the straps that prevented him from hurtling off onto the galley floor. He took one of the two mattresses and with the little hand pump began inflating it carefully. It grew until it stretched from wall to wall. There was hardly room in the galley for Pat and Horace and the mattress and me.

That first night on board we talked until morning, for we couldn't sleep. Every street lamp, every illuminated sign and every theatre marquee seemed to be exactly ten feet above ground on a level with the windows of our flying bridge. The venetian blinds on those four large windows could not be pulled tight enough to shut out the light. And how they rattled. Each individual lath had a rattle of its own and the chains that held them kept up a continuous tinkling. The novelty as well as the noise and the flashing lights kept us awake. We discussed Horace's refrigerated roost and Coyte's "boidcage."

"What we need is an Indian crew," I said. "Fakirs, or whatever they call them. They're used to sleeping on beds of nails."

"I'd like to see one of those fakirs try sleeping on this shelf we're on," said Pat.

Later we learned that Greyhound drivers never sleep. Popp drove the whole way to Florida while Coyte lay on his Procrustean bed with his feet pulled up and his Elizabethan drama course on his knees. Then Coyte drove



the whole way back while Popp curled up in the "boid-cage" with back copies of the *Police Gazette*.

Our first stop was in Fredericksburg, Virginia, at half past seven the following morning. We had covered 318 miles, averaging better than forty miles per hour. Our gas consumption was seven miles to the gallon. Both tanks were nearly empty.

I had supplied the drivers with credit cards of Texaco, Standard and Shell, with instructions to pull into the nearest station for our four scheduled stops each day. These were to be: 8 A.M. for breakfast and 8 P.M. for dinner; 2 P.M. for lunch and 2 A.M. for a midnight snack. Each stop was to last thirty minutes, leaving twenty-two hours of round-the-clock driving.

I had been wide-awake all night and jumped out of bed as soon as we pulled up at the Texaco station.

"That's right," said Pat, as I staggered down the companionway, "every minute counts. Don't want to fall behind schedule, do we." She yawned and stretched luxuriously into the empty space.

I was pleased to find everything proceeding on schedule. Coyte was supervising the filling of the tanks and checking the oil, water, and air in our ten tires. Popp was shaving in the restroom. The sound of sizzling bacon and the smell of frying eggs came cheerily from Horace's galley.

However, my stops did not work out as planned. I forgot to allow for three things: Horace's slowness, the drivers' appetites, and the crowds. Horace was no short-order cook. His movements in the galley had dignity and preci-

sion, but not speed. You couldn't rush him. Water boiled slower for Horace than for other cooks. As Coyte's four eggs had to be boiled exactly three and a half minutes, and Popp's six eggs had to be fried, along with half a pound of bacon, and half a loaf of bread to be toasted and six cups of coffee to be brewed, the maneuvers in the galley each morning consumed about twice the time that I had allotted for breakfast.

We pulled out of Fredericksburg at a quarter to nine and that left us fifteen minutes behind schedule, in spite of the good time we made during the night. But Popp more than made up for lost time. Smaller vehicles scurried for shelter when they caught sight of us in their rear view mirrors, bearing down on them like a railroad train. Their drivers parked well over on the shoulders of the highway and stared openmouthed as we whizzed past. Even Greyhound buses slowed down and signalled us to pass when the road was clear ahead.

When we stopped for lunch at Sanford, North Carolina, I asked Coyte, "How come?"

"Popp gives them the 'Greyhound Flash'," he explained. "It's a company signal. He flashes his spotlight once toward their rearview extension mirror. It means: 'Behind schedule. Trying to make up time.' Their answer is two flashes of their tail-light. That says: 'All clear ahead'."

"What other high signs of the highway do you have?"

"Two spotlight flashes from a passing bus mean: 'Look out ahead for cops.' Three flashes mean: 'Trouble. Please stop'."

That luncheon stop in the Standard Oil station lasted nearly two hours, and it wasn't due to Horace or Popp or Coyte. It was the crowds who threw us for a loss. They climbed all over the truck and tried to crawl on top of the Clipper. They did their best to peer through the flying bridge windows; but these were a little too high for them to see through, even on tiptoe. They banged on the doors, pulled at the knobs and tried to stick fingers through the venetian blinds. It was a good-natured crowd, but they were curious. The Clipper was the nearest thing to a free circus that had ever passed through Sanford, North Carolina. It seemed to inspire even the most taciturn to voluminous self-expression. I could hear people badgering Horace in the galley and Coyte at the gas pumps and even Popp in the restroom with interminable questions.

"What is it? Who lives in it? How much did it cost? How much does it weigh? How much gas does it burn? Where is it going and why?"

Some asked for pictures and autographs. Some offered to trade their wives for it.

The crowd was ripe for any cock-and-bull story and Popp rose to the occasion.

"The Clipper," he whispered behind his hand, "contains an Indian Princess going to meet her lover." Later, in the galley, we heard him tell another inquirer, who had interrupted the consumption of his fourth hamburger: "It's a billionaire Texas erl baron and his chee-ild bride." Still later, when he stood beneath our flying bridge, skillfully wielding a toothpick, we heard his hoarse whisper: "Don't let on I told you, but it's a portable aviary full of



rare African boids, on their way to the Mexico City Zoo.”

Inspired, perhaps, by Popp’s comments, one of the crowd appointed himself master of ceremonies. He stood on a box below the flying bridge window and stared in. Pat and I sat up there eating our lunch. We had hoped that aloft we could escape the eyes of the crowd. But he managed to peek through the venetian blinds and give a play-by-play report to the audience below.

“The guy’s picking up a fork,” announced our Peeping Tom. “Yeah, a regular fork. Now he’s spearing something. Now he’s eating it. Looks like porterhouse steak.” He paused while this sank in; then added, with genuine emotion: “Naw, it’s not steak. Just hamburger.”

We pulled out of Sanford, North Carolina at ten minutes after four and arrived for our dinner in a Shell gas station in Columbia, South Carolina at five minutes to eleven that night. It wasn’t the fault of the drivers. The Clipper ran fine on level roads. But on any sort of an uphill grade it would slow down, almost to a walk. It was then that the Fords and Chevies whizzed around our port side in what I regarded a highly impertinent manner. Sometimes kids leaned out of old battered Model T’s and hollered: “Get a horse!”

It was midnight in Columbia, South Carolina before Horace had finished the evening meal and was ready to blow up his mattress and retire. He had forgotten to bring the hand pump and was huffing and puffing outside the galley door trying to inflate the mattress by mouth. Popp was busy with the air hose, rapidly bringing our ten tires up to pressure. Popp eyed Horace and timed his circuit of



the Clipper so as to arrive at the last tire in front of the galley just as Horace paused for breath, with his mattress less than a quarter inflated.

"Save your wind, big boy," he said, handing Horace the nozzle. "Here, use this air hose."

Horace shook his head, carefully covering the air valve with his finger so as not to lose any of the precious contents.

"Mr. Zobel says I'm not supposed to. Might get too much air in it."

"Naw," scoffed Popp. "Don't be a joik. Just watch this little gauge. Make sure you don't get over sixty pounds pressure."

While Horace applied the air hose, Popp backed off to the motor-driven pump and unscrewed the compressed air valve wide open.

A moment later there was an ear-splitting explosion. Pat and I rushed to the rear of the Clipper. We thought the butane gas tanks had blown up. Popp was standing by the pump with a dead-pan expression.

"What happened?" we asked him.

"It's nothin'," Popp explained. "Horace was making with his mattress and near busted a lung. He shouldn't ought to have done it. He don't know his own strength."

We saw Horace's face in the light through the galley door. It was a purplish white. Bits of torn rubber were still fluttering down around him.



## Chapter 13

### BIG BUSINESS

I FELT that the time had come to test the Clipper's business ability. I hoped that it might have considerable advertising sex appeal. I pictured big contracts being signed at my little desk. My imagination raced out in front of the Clipper and looped the loop. So we detoured to Winston-Salem to call on my most promising prospect, *Camel* cigarettes.

I made sure that all the *Chesterfields*, *Old Golds* and *Lucky Strikes* were emptied out of the automatic cigarette containers and replaced with *Camels* which would pop out, lit and ready to give that mellow smoke people were willing to walk a mile for. It would ruin my chance of

landing the account if the advertising manager of *Camels* reached for a cigarette and a *Chesterfield* popped out.

We drew up in front of the executive offices of the Reynolds Tobacco Company and soon the Clipper was overflowing with enough top executives to have approved a million-dollar appropriation. None of them seemed to have brought any cigarettes with them; so they explored the Clipper to see what brand we smoked. Our three automatic cigarette gadgets did a brisk business delivering ready-lighted *Camels*. The satisfied smiles on the faces of the cameldrivers made my future look bright.

"Why don't you-all come along for a spin in the Clipper?" I asked, in my best southern drawl. Directions over the intercom by the advertising manager soon brought us to the factory. "Now it's our turn to play host," he said. "Come in and let us show you and your wife how *Camel* cigarettes are made."

I accepted, of course, with enthusiasm. And Pat agreed reluctantly, after I gave her my Stony Stare, that she would be charmed.

Now a tobacco plant has a very pungent odor, and Pat is allergic to odors. All the way through she held her lace handkerchief, well doused with *Vol de Nuit*, to her pretty little nose.

When the tour was completed, the advertising manager asked me what I thought of the *Camel* factory.

"Most fascinating thing I ever saw," I exclaimed rapturously.

He turned to Pat.

"And how did you like it, Mrs. Zobel?"

"It smells," she replied with perfect honesty and innocence. One of Pat's allergies, I think, is Big Business.

The following morning, as we raced along south of Alma, Georgia, Pat and I had our bathing suits on. We were getting our pre-Florida suntans under the Vita-glass panel in the flying bridge skylight. We didn't want to arrive in Palm Beach looking like Yankees.

The door to Horace's galley slid open so quietly that I jumped when I heard his voice in the lounge.

"I'm sorry to bother you, sir, but there has been a mishap in the galley."

"Hurry up, Horace, and tell me what happened. Should I stop the Clipper?"

"Well, sir," Horace continued with great deliberation, "it was this way. I was sweeping out the litter. That was right after our breakfast stop at Alma, about an hour ago. I was rushed there, you remember. We only stopped forty-five minutes and I didn't have time to clean up until we got under way. So as soon as we got out of Alma, I opened the door of the galley and began sweeping the litter out onto the highway."

"While we were doing fifty miles an hour?"

"Yes, sir. I didn't have time to empty it at the Shell station and we don't have room for a garbage can of our own, so I just sweep it out on the highway and it blows to the side of the road."

"Well, then, what was the mishap? Did someone pass and tear off the galley door?"

"No, sir."

"Then what *did* happen?" Pat asked in exasperation.



Horace avoided her gaze. "I hate to tell you, sir. I've been a long time making up my mind to."

"Go ahead."

"Well, I swept out the mattress."

"You swept out the *spare* mattress?" Pat asked in amazement.

"Yes, ma'am." Horace's somber face showed his distress. "After the first one blew up, I was awfully careful and blew number two up by mouth. I was even afraid to let the air out too fast. So, before we arrived in Alma, I stood it up against the wall while I was preparing breakfast. We left Alma so fast I didn't have time to deflate it and put it away. Then, when I was sweeping out, it just sort of floated out the door."

It had taken Horace about ten miles to tell his story, and I had been too spellbound to move. Now there was no time to be lost. I reached for the intercom. Popp's deep voice came over the wire.

"How far are we out of Alma?"

"About toity miles. So what's wid Alma?"

"That's where Horace swept out the mattress."

"Oh, yeah? Do you want I should toin and go back?"

"I hate to lose the time," I said. "What do you think? I'll leave it up to you."

"Let the joik sleep on a blanket," said Popp as he hung up the phone.

We were making such good time that Pat and I decided to go straight through to Miami Beach, instead of stopping at Palm Beach. That night we really slept; and we hoped Horace did the same on the blankets and eiderdown puff

with which we had supplied him. From about 2 A.M. on, the Clipper seemed to be riding much smoother. I said to Pat just before I fell asleep: "This egg-crate suspension, as Schult would say, is *really* something. You'd hardly know we were moving."

As a matter of fact we weren't. We discovered this the following morning when we woke up at Baker's Haulover Trailer Camp at Miami Beach.

"Whatever gave you the idea," I asked Coyte after breakfast, "of parking in a trailer camp?" Popp was snoring loudly in the "boidcage."

"We had to, sir. We passed a patrol car last night and inquired. They told us that any trailers found parked outside a trailer park in Miami Beach are classified as a 'public nuisance.' They can be hauled away and impounded."

"I'd like to see them try it with the Clipper," I snorted.

Our stay in the trailer camp, however, turned out to be a very good idea. The generator and batteries got a rest, we had a constant supply of fresh water, and Horace had a place for his "litter." Our fellow trailerites were a friendly group to whom the Clipper was a source of never-ending wonder. Coyte and Popp appointed themselves a standing committee and helped us conduct tours through its interior.

Horace's first expedition was in search of a new air mattress. He returned from Miami with the news that he had found just the thing.

"It cost \$22.00, so I ordered it C.O.D., sir. I hope you won't mind."

That afternoon, the delivery truck drew up at the trailer camp and demanded the \$22.00. They left with the money before I could open the mattress. But a little group of our neighbors had gathered to witness the unveiling.

It was quite a ceremony. Horace got out a new hand pump. He pumped air into the mattress but he knocked the wind out of us. As the small package grew it assumed strange shapes. It developed ears and a neck and legs and a stubby tail. Fully inflated it turned into a red and green sea horse with a long yellow neck and an oval pink spot for a saddle.

Next day, with Pat on the rumble seat, clutching Horace's deflated swimming pool mattress under her arm, we set out on the scooter to return the purchase. But we were not yet acquainted with Junior's bad habits. First was the problem of making him start; second, of making him stop. Popp and Coyte grabbed the handle bars and raced down toward the beach. When he hit the hard sand, Junior took off under his own momentum.

"Which way?" Pat yelled to a group of bathers on the beach.

"That way," they pointed toward the water, "if you're going for a swim."

I tugged at the handle bars and tore off down the beach in what I hoped was the direction of Miami. At the first opportunity, I turned on to the highway.



Pat had brought the instruction manual along. She read it aloud over my shoulder while I clung to the outer edge of the highway and passing cars whizzed by. "To increase speed," Pat read, "turn *right* rubber handle in clockwise direction."

Pat is left-handed. She says that is why she has trouble telling right from left. She has to cross herself to be sure. But this time she had it right. She read it out of the manual. I turned the handle clockwise as far as it would go and the scooter speeded up to forty miles an hour and went straight through a traffic light. "I can't stop this thing," I yelled at the traffic cop who stood at the intersection. "Which way is Miami?" He pointed to the right, over the MacArthur Causeway. I tried to twist the rubber handle back to the left but it was stuck. Nothing could stop Junior now. Not even the collector at the toll booth in the center of the Causeway who held out his hand for our fare.

"Did you pay him?" I flung at Pat over my shoulder as we rushed past.

"No. I haven't any money. But I gave him the scooter manual. If we ever get back, he can tell us how to stop it."

I kept my eyes on the road and swerved sharply to avoid sideswiping traffic as we rushed down Biscayne Boulevard. Ahead of us we saw the store and swerved into their parking lot. A moment later we had driven through the wide open double doors and were careening madly down the center aisle. Customers sought safety behind the counters. A dandified little floor walker, with a white-



feathered boutonniere, stuck up his hands to stop us. "Air mattresses," I shouted at him, as we rushed past. "Where are they?"

"Through the store—in the yard behind," he turned and called after us.

It was lucky they were, because that was the way we were headed. Nothing could change our course. We went through the store without buying a thing and were out in the yard, bound for a high brick wall, when we saw the mattress display. It was dead ahead, behind the gaudy beach umbrellas and the striped deck chairs.

Like a champion skier doing the 'giant slalom,' I wove Junior at breakneck speed through the racing turns between the beach umbrellas and deck chairs. With swivel hips I darted and danced the scooter down the course, followed by Pat like a dream partner in a mad and intricate fandango. We "shussed." We "christied." And at the finish we landed with a beautiful "geländesprung." Pat and Junior and I hit the pile of inflated air mattresses in a dead heat and, at last, Junior's two-cylinder motor coughed to a stop.

The little floor walker finished second. "If you've scratched any of those air mattresses, you'll have to buy them," he chirped. "All of them!"

"I'll do it," I agreed. "I love every breath in their dear rubber hides."



## Chapter 14

### BISCUIT DE SAVOIE

**L**IFE ABOARD the Clipper in Miami Beach was enjoyed by all. Popp went nightly to the jai alai games and Coyte caught up on his Elizabethan drama. Popp ate steaks to his heart's content at the Lighthouse Restaurant next to the trailer camp and sometimes had his meals sent ready-cooked to the galley. I got the bills when I left.

Horace liked his new importance as maître d'hôtel and kept his uniform and cap neatly pressed and brushed. He guided tours through the Clipper as though it were the Taj Mahal. And Pat and I finally learned to house-break Junior.

After Miami Beach came Palm Beach. We would have

liked to stay in Florida all winter; but business beckoned and reluctantly we headed north again.

My appointment in Lansing, Michigan was for 10 A.M. with the sales manager of the Oldsmobile Corporation and Coyte had the Clipper parked under the president's window before the executive offices were open for business.

"We've got to make a good impression," I told Pat. "I've been trying to land this account for a year. The sales manager says he may get the president to come aboard; he's wild about gadgets." I wanted to be sure they worked so I went out to check the generator.

A whole series of interruptions and knocks at the door had delayed us. At nine o'clock Horace was still cleaning the galley. Pat tied an old bandana around her hair and started to vacuum the rug. I was still at work on the generator but she told me later what I had missed. She had just finished the rug and was waxing the floor of the flying bridge, when another knock came at the door. A man with red hair stood outside the Clipper. Pat turned off the electric waxer and ran downstairs for the tenth time. She opened the door just enough to peek out.

"Well, what do *you* want?" she asked in exasperation.

"I just thought," said the red-haired man, "you might let me look at your trailer."

"Well," said Pat, "you thought *wrong*!" And she closed the door in his face with a bang.

By ten we were ready and Horace in a clean uniform answered the rap on the door as our ship's clock struck four bells. The sales manager came aboard and intro-

duced me to his companion. I noticed a strange look on Pat's face as she saw his red hair.

"Darling," I said, "let me present the president of the Oldsmobile Corporation."

"We've met already," the red-haired man said, laughing.

"Yes," said Pat, "I threw him out of the trailer."

Our next brush with Big Business was at the General Electric plant in Schenectady. I knew the promotion manager rather well and had invited him to lunch on board the Clipper.

"We'll have to cook something special," I told Pat. "He's a real gourmet—and he looks it."

"You certainly picked a fine day for it," Pat said, as we huddled on the lounge, wrapped to the ears in coats and mufflers. "The pipes are frozen, the refrigerators don't work and look at that electric heater." It gave off only a faint pinkish glow.

"The batteries are run down," I explained. "The generator is frozen too. But," I added cheerfully, "the gas range still works and we don't need to worry about the refrigerators. It's cold enough to hang the food outside the window. Why not broil those filet steaks we've got and whip up your famous *biscuit de Savoie* for dessert."

Pat counted on her fingers: "Eggs, vanilla, cake flour, and confectioner's sugar. All right, I'll try it."

Pat did miracles with that lunch. When the promotion manager arrived, the mushroom soup was ready to serve,



the filets all set for the broiler and the *biscuit de Savoie* had only half an hour more to bake.

"Better keep on your coat and muffler," I greeted our guest, as I handed him a hot rum punch, well spiced with cinnamon, cloves and sugar.

He warmed his hands on the glass. "O.K. to take off my mittens?"

Pat came in from the galley, followed by Horace, bearing the steaming soup. I introduced Pat and we quickly finished our drinks and sat down at the table.

"Preheat the broiler," Pat whispered to Horace, "and cook those filets seven minutes on each side. Better make that six minutes on each side," she corrected as she turned to our guest. "Myron told me how you like your steaks. The same as we do—just warmed up."

The filets helped; but what really sold the P.M. was the *biscuit de Savoie*. He asked Pat for the recipe.

"Beat eight egg yolks," she dictated, as he wrote on the back of one of my contract forms, "add one and a half cups of sugar and beat them together for fifteen minutes. Add one teaspoonful of vanilla and one cup of pre-sifted cake flour, sifted twice more with one half teaspoon of salt. Beat until blended. Then beat the eight egg whites stiff and fold in carefully. Pour the batter into a well-buttered ring mold and bake in a very moderate oven for one and a half hours or until the cake shrinks from the sides of the pan and the tester comes out clean. Then dust with confectioner's sugar, and that's all there is to it." She pursed her lips and added, "I got

it from *The Gourmet Cookbook*. But I add a couple of drops of Kirsch. That's my own idea."

The P.M. tasted another mouthful and smacked his lips. "That Kirsch is a good touch; but there's something else that gives it that flower-like, exotic flavor."

"I can't think what that could be," Pat puzzled.

Horace was serving coffee.

"It's a baffling taste, a real teaser," our guest continued. "I've tasted it somewhere before. Like violets or. . ."

"Or lavender?"

We looked up in surprise at Horace who had asked the question.

"That's it. Like lavender. An inspiration," the P.M. added. "I've tasted candied violets in desserts at the *Grand Vefour* in Paris and honeyed fruits in Armenian restaurants, but never lavender. How did you ever come to think of it?"

Pat shook her head. "I didn't think of it." She turned to Horace. "Did you put it in?"

"No, ma'am. But you remember that wooden bowl, the one you beat the eggs in. That was the bowl Mr. Zobel gave me to throw away; but it was so pretty, I kept it. I think it was imported. The cover said: 'Yardley's English Lavender.'"

I turned to the P.M. "Better get that recipe right," I said. "Just add: 'season to taste with shaving soap.'"

When I told Popp that my business trip was finished and we could return to New York, I had in mind a leisurely trip down the banks of the Hudson, via Albany.

I thought it might take us two days. But the thought of returning to Brooklyn got the same reaction from Popp that you get from a livery hack when you head him back to the stable.

We left at midnight and spent a sleepless night, the result, perhaps, of Popp's race against time and the street lights that flashed through the rattling blinds. Or it may have been the aftereffects of the shaving soap in Pat's *biscuit de Savoie*.

When the Clipper made its morning stop, I crawled wearily out of our roost on the flying bridge and staggered down the companionway. I didn't bother to look through the drawn blinds. I felt my way with half-shut eyes into the shower and turned on the water. It was cold in the Clipper and the warm water felt good on my shoulders. I let it run a long time. Then I did a perfunctory job with razor and comb and pulled on the old slacks and sweater which I wore when the Clipper was enroute.

While I dressed, Pat tottered down in a robe and slippers and made her way to the shower. I heard her turn the water on full force and run it until the tank was empty. I could hear it gurgle down the drain and splash as it hit the pavement. We usually didn't shower while in gas stations. We showered enroute and the water we left behind ran off the crown of the highway. But now I didn't care. Probably the gas station needed a good washing down. And they would have plenty of water to refill our seventy-gallon tank. Pat came out of the shower in robe and slippers and started to hunt for her nylons.

"Where are we anyway?" she asked. "Sounds like an



awful mob outside." I cocked my ears to the voice of the crowd which was growing louder and louder.

"Does sound like more yammer than usual," I agreed.

Over the buzz of the crowd, we heard Popp's voice.

"Stand back, folks. Give us room. Keep movin'. No shovin', please. Look out for that water, goils! You shouldn't ought to step off the coib. You'll get your feet wet. This white elephant ain't house-broke yet."

"Popp is having the time of his life," I told Pat. "He's right in his element. This must be the biggest crowd we ever drew. I'm going out to see where we are."

I opened the door and stepped out into about a foot of water. We were in New York City—right smack in the middle of it. Popp had pulled up the Clipper opposite my office in Radio City. We were parked in Rockefeller Plaza. On our right was the skating rink. On our left was the sixty-four-story R.C.A. building. And all around us, from curb to curb, were people—hundreds of people, packed shoulder to shoulder, laughing and pointing. The Plaza police and the uniformed doorman were trying to hold the crowds back while the stream that still ran from the shower vent spread a puddle of soapy water the width of the Plaza. All over Radio Center windows were flying open and some bright lads from an advertising agency on the fiftieth floor, where my offices were, had started a shower of torn telephone books.

Crouched in the water, with a press card stuck in his hat, a news photographer snapped his shutter, just as I stepped from the Clipper.

"What's the big idea?" I asked him.



"*Daily Mirror*," he announced curtly. "Picture page called, 'Curiosities in the News.' First time anyone's showered in the Plaza." He paused to change films. "Your driver says there's a blonde in there. Tell her to finish her shower and hurry out."

I shot back into the Clipper and slammed the door. "We're in front of my office," I warned Pat. "There are a thousand people out there. Plus a news photographer from the *Mirror*. They're all waiting for you to finish your shower and come out!"

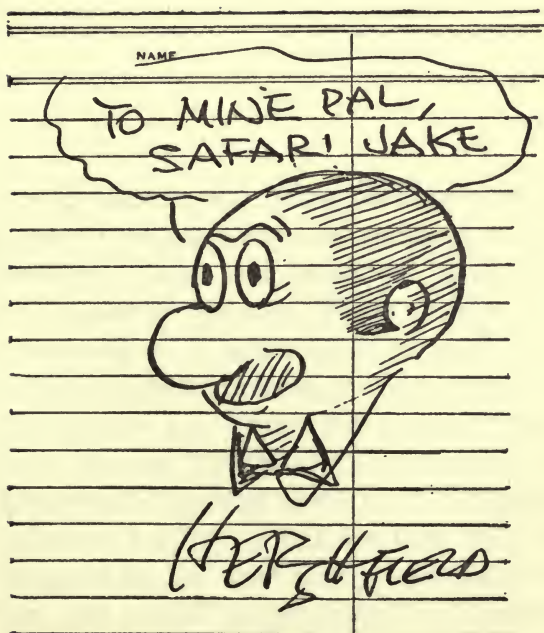
"Let them wait," said Pat, calmly, as she picked out her most becoming dress.

It was shortly after Pat took her shower in Rockefeller Plaza that I heard the alarming rumor that someone was building a trailer which was going to be bigger and better and trickier than mine.



Book Four

BATTLE OF THE BEHEMOTHS



[From the Guest Register]

HARRY HERSHFIELD







## Chapter 15

### SOFT SHOULDERS

**T**HE RIVAL TRAILER was being built by a Mr. and Mrs. Larry Copley Thaw, wealthy amateur explorers and prominent socialites. Thaw had unlimited funds with which to work. Instead of \$20,000, Thaw's trailer would cost \$80,000. Instead of it being built in an Elkhart trailer works, Thaw's trailer was being built by General Motors. No trial-and-error for Thaw. No worries about weight—or price. No hot refrigerators and cold heaters. No frozen generators. No dead batteries. No blown tires. No silent radios or rattling blinds for him. His trailer was being designed by the world's top automotive engineers and every part would be pre-tested in General Motors' laboratories.

I was brooding over these thoughts when the girl in the outer office announced a visitor to see me—Mr. Larry Copley Thaw. A moment later a very large and imposing character with a guardsman's mustache walked in. He introduced himself in a deep voice with a ripe Oxonian accent.

"I'm Thaw," he said as he seated himself. "I imagine you've heard of the caravan we're building for the 'Thaw Trans-Asia Expedition.'"

I confessed that I had. "But I didn't know it was a caravan," I added. "I thought it was a trailer."

"Oh, that's what they call those things abroad, you know. I hate the American term of trailer. Sounds so common—like a vegetable van, or something frightfully commercial." He took a long initialed Russian cigarette out of a large gold case and tapped it carefully on the back of his hand. "Besides, ours really is a caravan, you know. Two passenger cars, two baggage trucks and the land yacht."

I sat up at the last two words. Thaw laughed patronizingly. "Rather a fleet, I admit," he went on. "We already refer to our Land Yacht as 'The Flagship.'"

Ouch! That hurt. He hadn't even mentioned our Clipper; but I knew that was the purpose of his visit. Hatch had proudly reported the interest that the General Motors styling section and product study departments had taken in the Clipper when he had it in Detroit. He had let them photograph and sketch to their heart's content. Thaw certainly had seen those pictures and was here to make sure that nothing had been overlooked.

"When do you expect to get delivery of your—er—caravan?" I asked him.

"In five weeks. Thirty-nine days, to be precise."

"Don't count on it," I warned him. "You'll be lucky if it's finished by Christmas. I've been through the mill. I know."

"Never fear," Thaw assured me grandly. "The 'Thaw Trans-Asia Expedition' will sail from New York six weeks from today." He paused and lighted his cigarette. "Our shedule is all set. Our six Indian servants are trained and will be waiting for us in Le Havre in a fortnight. The American Department of State, the British and French Foreign Offices, the British India Office and the General Motors Overseas division have measured and mapped every mountain road from Budapest to the Khyber Pass and pre-arranged for customs courtesies and a government official to act as courier in every country we pass through."

I was overwhelmed. But, in spite of his condescension, I could not resist showing him the Clipper press notices and photos. Thaw thumbed listlessly through the album.

"This sort of stuff leaves Peggy and me quite cold," he informed me. "We shan't allow any of those newspaper fellows aboard. We're taking our own photographer along. And a quarter-million feet of film. I imagine he shall have quite enough pictures, mostly color, of course." As an afterthought he added: "By the bye, our caravan will be christened on our estate in Manhasset the Saturday before we sail. If you're out on Long Island in your—er—trailer, you might drop by."

"I can hardly wait!" I said.



We had moved to the Gotham Hotel which was close to my office. It didn't pay to reopen our Greenwich apartment, since we spent so much time on the Clipper. Besides, I had a due-bill on the Gotham which was about to expire.

The California trip was to last a month and Pat bought plenty of supplies. The Clipper's two refrigerators and many storage compartments were stuffed with everything she could find in the way of canned delicacies, including an ample supply of my favorite whole Hungarian goose liver. The humidor was stocked with Dunhill's choicest Havanas. The wine cellar had been fully replenished. Nothing remained but to maneuver the Clipper in front of the hotel and bring down our clothes.

As we planned to leave at the height of the after-theatre traffic, I had given this project considerable thought. The Clipper came up Fifth Avenue slowly and turned west into Fifty-fifth Street at exactly a quarter to midnight. At 11:35 P.M. Horace had hired four taxis. He had them park, with meters running, one behind the other, in front of the Gotham. They blocked the curb from the corner of Fifty-fifth and Fifth across the entire hotel front. At 11:45, Horace paid off the taxi nearest the corner and the Clipper warped into the curb. As each cab was paid and departed the Clipper crept forward. For ten minutes traffic was blocked as far back as Lexington. But by five minutes to twelve, in spite of honking horns, police whistles and catcalls, the maneuver was accomplished.

The last act in our drama of departure saw six bell



boys file down the main lobby and out through the hotel doors, carrying our clothes in bureau drawers. Wolf whistles and Bronx cheers from our audience of sidewalk-superintendents greeted the public repacking of Pat's lace lingerie. The Clipper had no space for luggage; so this seemed the most direct method of transferring our belongings. It certainly was the most dramatic.

At midnight Horace tipped all the bell boys and the doorman and the Clipper pulled away from the curb. We were bound for California and with a new and untried driver at the wheel. Popp and Coyte had been called back by Greyhound to their full-time jobs. We hated to lose them. But the heavy bus travel season was commencing and there were no Greyhound drivers to be had.

Moreover, I owed a debt of gratitude to the man at the wheel. His name was Eddie Berel and he had fixed my radio. He was long and lanky, with a shock of unruly blond hair and a perpetual grin on his face. He had worked in a garage in the daytime and done radio repair work at night and I figured that on the Clipper he could follow the same routine.

We were bound for Philadelphia over U.S. Highway 1. From there we would turn west and continue over U.S. 30 to Salt Lake City. There we would switch to U.S. 50 and follow it across Nevada to San Francisco. We expected to make the whole trip in a week with Eddie alone at the wheel.

But Eddie was not alone. He had the whole world with him. He had brought his own mobile rig and installed it on the empty seat beside him. Pat and I did not know, as

we rushed through the night, that Eddie was steering with his left hand and tuning the receiver with his right.

When daylight broke through the blinds of the flying bridge, Pat sat up in bed and stretched.

"Well, that's what I call driving," she said. "I slept like a log. We hardly seemed to be moving all night."

I parted the blinds and looked out. "We weren't," I said. "We're parked on the side of the road." I looked again and saw why. "We're stuck in mud to our hub caps," I reported. "There are two trucks marked 'Trenton Garage' trying to pull us out."

Pat peeked through the blinds. "That sign over there says '12 miles to New York,'" she announced.

With the roar of truck motors, much voluble cursing and a great clanking of chains, the Clipper lurched out of the mud. After I had paid the towing charge of forty dollars Eddie explained the deal.

"It started raining cats and dogs right after we left last night and I was afraid I'd get sleepy sitting there alone at the wheel. So I turned my receiver on. Ten miles out of New York, what do I hear but Goa—near Bombay, India—a 'rare one.' There's only one ham in Goa; and I worked him last night," Eddie paused and grinned happily.

"Were you driving the Clipper when all this happened?" I asked him.

"Oh, no. I didn't want to take a chance of working my transmitter and driving the truck at the same time."

"I should hope not," I added.

"You said it, boss. Might have lost Goa."

"Or lost us."

"So I parked off the highway. By the time I finished the contact, the mud was up to our axles."

"How long were we stuck?"

"About six hours. I finally raised a ham in Trenton, and had him phone the garage. The night watchman got those truck drivers out of bed. That's why they charged double. But I knew you were in a hurry and would not want to be held up."

"I was 'held up' all right."

"I worked Goa again later and used your call so he's going to send *you* a confirmation card too. And, believe me, Goa's a 'rare one.'"

"That helps a little," I agreed.

With the Clipper back on the concrete again, we continued down Highway 1. We had just passed Trenton, New Jersey when an Aerocar trailer, drawn by a convertible Cadillac, raced past us. It was doing about sixty miles an hour and all we saw of the trailer was a bearded face at the window. "That old man's really anxious to get down to the sunny Southland," said Pat.

Ten minutes later the same trailer with its solitary occupant streaked past us again. This time the Beard stuck its head out of the window and yelled something to Eddie.

I picked up the intercom. "What does the old man want?" I asked.

"The old beaver wants to play," Eddie replied. "He wants to race us from here to Philadelphia."

We watched while the Aerocar pulled over and let us pass. Five minutes later he was abreast of us again. This



time the Beard addressed its remarks to us at our open flying bridge window.

"Race you to Rittenhouse Square in the City of Brotherly Love!" the Beard yelled. "Loser buys drinks."

I looked at Pat.

"Go ahead," she said. "He'll win. Make the old boy happy."

"O.K.," I agreed. "But he's sure spry for his age."

I nodded to the Beard in agreement and motioned him ahead. I wanted to leave a little room on the highway for passing cars. Then I picked up the intercom. "O.K., Eddie, let her rip. But please don't work any 'rare ones' during the race. Keep both hands on the wheel."

The Aerocar tore off at seventy miles an hour. As we expected, it was parked in Rittenhouse Square when we arrived in Philadelphia. We drew up behind and I got out to invite the old man on board.

"The drinks are on me, sir," I said respectfully, as I held out my hand. The Beard grasped it and squeezed until my fingers cracked. He certainly was a well-preserved old gentleman. "Come aboard," I said, "and I'll pay up."

"My name's Plankinton," said our guest, when he boarded the Clipper and grasped Pat's slender hand.

I saw her wince and remove her ring to rub the bruised skin.

"Would you care for a glass of sherry?" she asked. Plankinton and I exchanged glances. "Better let me mix you a daiquiri. That was a hard-won race."

While I got all my gadgets out of the bar, Pat showed



our guest through the Clipper. Then he sat down beside me while Pat stayed out with Horace preparing *hors d'oeuvres*.

I asked him, "What do you think of the Clipper?"

"Too fancy for my taste," he said. "Here, let me help you with those daiquiris." He had them mixed before I could get my gadgets assembled.

"Now it's my turn," he said, when we had finished our drinks and canapes. "Come over to my rig, and let me buy a round."

As we started across, he whispered in my ear: "Your trailer's too clean for comfort. Wait till you see mine."

His Aerocar was stripped to the bare essentials. Four wicker chairs with soiled khaki cushions and a plywood bar were the only furnishings. He slept in a folding upper berth which still hung down on chains from the ceiling. The olive drab pillow and Army blanket lay up there in a crumpled heap. Fastened with brackets to the ceiling were rifles and fishing rods. He pulled three chairs up to the window and had drinks mixed and in our hands before we got seated.

When we had finished them, Pat thanked him and hurried from the Aerocar before he had time to shake hands. But I stayed behind and winced as he gave me the grip.

"Say, how old are you, anyway?"

"How old do you think?"

"Well," I said, as I flexed my sore fingers, "you look like sixty. But you feel much younger."

"I'm thirty-two," said Plankinton as he crushed my hand again in farewell.

I discussed the Beard with Eddie over the intercom as we turned off Highway 1.

"Quite a character," Eddie informed me. "I got the lowdown from his driver. His full moniker is William Woods Plankinton III. Seems he was jilted by a childhood sweetheart. So he vowed he was through with women, raised a beard and bought his trailer. He owns all the money there is in Milwaukee, plus the Plankinton Hotel. But all he does is hunt and fish and tear up and down the 'Pines to Palms' highway alone in that Aerocar. All the traffic cops know him. He sends them each a case of Scotch every Christmas. They call him 'The Hermit of Highway One.'"



## Chapter 16

### "STOP THAT TRUCK!"

**E**DDIE CONTINUED to work "rare ones" all over the world with his little mobile station. Listening on the deluxe receiver Butch had bought me, I could hear him. But no one, even in the towns we passed through, answered the calls I put out on my 1000-watt transmitter.

At last a reply came in to my "CQ." It was a ham in Pittsburgh, ten miles back. "How's tricks, Eddie?" he asked.

I was outraged. This was my first contact and I wasn't even getting credit for it.

"I'm not Eddie," I replied indignantly. "My name is Myron."

"Well," said the voice in my speaker, "stick to your

driving, kid. Put Eddie on. I want to talk to the boss of the Continental Clipper."

"I'm the boss," I told him. "Eddie's the driver. I'm running a thousand watts here in the trailer. Eddie's just running fifteen watts up in the truck."

"Don't kid me," the voice replied. "That's no kilowatt signal you're putting out. And, it says right here in the new issue of *The Amateurs' Journal* that Eddie Berel is running a kilowatt on the Continental Clipper." I heard him pick up the magazine and quote: "Probably the most elaborate amateur mobile installation in the world is the outfit shown above, operated on ten-meter phone by . . ." and he read off Eddie's call letters. "And there's a swell picture of the Clipper right over the article." He whistled. "Boy, you're a lucky stiff, Myron, to be driving a rig like that!"

I sputtered and blew a fuse, and so did my transmitter.

We stopped at a radio shop in Mansfield, Ohio. While Eddie repaired my rig, I bought a copy of *The Amateurs' Journal*. There was the Clipper's picture with Eddie's call letters.

"Let me see that rig of yours," I asked him. I climbed up into the truck and he showed it to me. It was what hams call a "Bread-Board Hook Up." Just a few coils and condensers and tubes nailed to a bread board. The parts were hooked together with pieces of bare wire. To an ancient broadcast receiver, without a speaker, Eddie had wired a ten-meter converter.

"And it works better than mine," I said with amazement.



"Sure. I built it myself."

"How much did it cost?" I asked, thinking of my own \$3,000 installation and the months that Butch had spent on it.

"About eighteen dollars. I used spare parts we had around the shop."

"But don't you need a kilowatt generator and twenty batteries to run it?"

"Naw," said Eddie. "I just hook it to the truck battery. This little 'vibro-pack'"—he pointed to something the size of a pack of cigarettes—"does the rest."

"OK, Eddie, we'll stay right here until you tune up my 1000-watt transmitter so it puts out a signal as good as your fifteen watts."

"You ain't got no thousand watts," Eddie informed me. "Butch just told you that to make you feel good. You're running one hundred watts and getting about three of them into that fancy rotary beam he hooked on back. What you need is a plain buggy-whip antenna high up on the flying bridge."

We went back into the radio shop. Before we left Mansfield, I was getting reports on my one hundred watts that were nearly as good as Eddie's fifteen.

From then on I was on the air every moment we weren't eating, and sometimes when we were. To save daylight hours we now took our meals on the run. Horace cooked hamburgers and we stopped the Clipper just long enough to send Eddie's up to the truck.

Even these frugal luncheons ran on a regular schedule.

Horace had cut his hamburger time down to eighteen miles, since we built the metal rail around the gas burners and his frying pan stayed on the stove. Pat made the toast on our electric toaster, plugged in to the flying bridge outlet. She could give Horace a fifteen mile head start and beat him to the draw. She set the trip mileage to zero when Horace started the hamburgers. When it got to fifteen miles she dropped in two slices of bread and pushed down the lever. There was just one flaw. While Pat made the toast I had to go off the air. I drew so much current when I turned on my transmitter that the toaster went pale. So did Pat. It was all right when I was receiving. I wore ear phones or "cans," as hams call them. They silenced the speaker. While receiving I used so little current that neither the toaster nor Pat took the slightest notice of me.

My most exciting contact started one day just at lunch time. Pat had set back the trip speedometer which meant Horace had the hamburgers on the fire. It showed ten miles already. But Johannesburg, South Africa, was calling "CQ." I couldn't resist. My enforced radio silence was not due for another five miles.

"ZS6DZ . . . ZS6DZ," I yelled excitedly into my microphone. "This is W1LSV on the Continental Clipper, mobile in motion, calling you!"

I called and called, draining the batteries and generator heavily as the ammeter clearly showed. When I stood by to listen, Johannesburg was already in contact with another station. He hadn't heard me. The station he had heard and answered was Eddie's.

I watched the trip mileage climb to eleven . . . twelve . . . thirteen. I had only two more miles to go. Would Eddie never finish! I called him on the intercom but he didn't hear it ring. He had his cans on. I couldn't call him on my own transmitter. American hams can only transmit on American frequencies. Eddie was tuned to South Africa.

At fifteen miles, Eddie signed off and Johannesburg stood by for other calls. He got one from me; and, miracle of miracles, he answered. It was my first foreign contact and I thrilled to hear him speak my name across seven thousand miles of South Atlantic.

Pat had the bread in her hand ready to drop in the toaster. The speedometer stood at fifteen miles—toast time.

"Keep talking ZS6DZ," I told Johannesburg. "Keep talking for three minutes. I can't transmit."

"Why can't you transmit? Is something wrong with your rig?"

"Nothing wrong," I shouted. "Keep talking, keep talking. I'll answer you in three minutes. Can't talk now. My wife's making toast."

Pat plopped the bread into the toaster and pushed down the lever with unnecessary violence. Johannesburg discussed the South African weather until the toast popped up.

Then I called him back. "Stand by," I said, "I have important traffic for you."

Horace came through the sliding door with Eddie's



hamburgers. Pat handed him the finished toast and reached for the intercom.

"It's no use," I told her. "Eddie's got his cans on. He won't hear you."

"Then how are we going to tell him his lunch is ready?"

I grabbed the mike. "Are you ready for the traffic, Johannesburg?"

ZS6DZ was loud and clear. "Go ahead with traffic."

"Call the station you contacted before you worked me. He's talking to Santiago, Chile now. Cut in on Santiago's frequency and tell him to stop the truck."

"Stop what truck?" came the astonished inquiry. I explained the situation as quickly as I could.

"Roger." I heard him cut in on Santiago.

"Stop the truck, Eddie! Stop the truck!" called Johannesburg. "Your 'tiffin' is ready." I heard Eddie acknowledge the Johannesburg message. "And take off those cans," Johannesburg concluded, "Myron wants to give you a tinkle!"

Continuous day and night operation of Eddie's station and mine soon made the Continental Clipper well known on the air. Scores of hams contacted us and "read our mail"—ham lingo for listening in. They kept daily schedules with us and called Pat, Horace, Eddie and me by our first names or "handles." They knew what we ate, when we got up, when we retired, how many miles we made each day; also how many of my gadgets broke and how many tires we blew. When they finally suggested we change from our hamburger diet I put Horace on the air.



"Let them do the shopping," Pat suggested. "Read the grocery list to a ham in the town ahead. He can order and meet us in front of the store."

Horace went on the air every day after that and read off the list: ". . . and a loaf of bread and a dozen eggs, and four quarts of milk, one case of Coca Cola and a pound of bacon." Eddie would listen in on his receiver and break in on the frequency with appropriate comments when Horace finished. "Atta boy, Horace. Let the hams bring home the bacon."

Before we left Illinois we contacted an amateur station in New York City. The ham who operated it was an old Shakespearean actor. This was a contact even Pat enjoyed.

"Ever play Hamlet?" I asked him.

"Played every part except the Queen and Ophelia—and I could play those too." He cleared his throat and started reciting from memory. He changed his voice with each part. He even put in the stage directions. Pat and I applauded when he played the Ghost in a deep sepulchral voice, but he was still transmitting and couldn't hear us. It was probably the longest transmission in radio history. It lasted as far as Clinton, Iowa.

"Look for me tomorrow, same time, same frequency," he said when he signed off. "I'll do Act Two."

That production of Hamlet was a road show. Our old trouper recited an act a day. All we missed were the gestures. The Ghost walked in Aurora, Illinois. Hamlet rehearsed the players in Ames, Iowa. Polonius was stabbed in North Platte, Nebraska. Ophelia drowned in Cheyenne, Wyoming. And Hamlet and Laertes and the King

were stabbed to death and the Queen took poison in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Eddie took no part in our Shakespearean marathon. He was a "D.X. Hound," a searcher after new countries. He never wasted time on "local" contacts.

"I'll work the 'rare ones'," said Eddie, "and leave the ham actors to you."

We parked for the night in Salt Lake City, near the Police Station. After dinner the Chief came aboard and we showed him through the Clipper.

"I wish," he said, "I could reciprocate. But all I've got to offer is the hospitality of the city jail."

"That's just what we want," said Pat. "We washed our laundry in Pittsburgh and it's been soggy ever since."

That night Pat's silk slips, Horace's long woolen drawers, Eddie's shorts and my shirts hung side by side in the prison laundry.

With our freshly ironed clothes we started out next morning over Highway 50. Our trip was nearly over; and I had to admit that Eddie's one-armed driving was getting us there. Darkness found us entering Nevada. As our tanks were full and gas stations few and far between, we decided to drive on. One hour west of Eureka and two hours east of Austin, in the most desolate part of Nevada, it happened. Pat had already retired to her roost. I was taking a shower. Suddenly the Clipper stopped with a jerk. I reached for the walls, only two feet away, and braced myself.

"Eddie must have heard another 'rare one'," I thought. I threw on a robe and raced for the intercom.

"What is it?" I asked. "Goa, again?"

"Not Goa," Eddie's cheerful voice came back. "Cowa." He spelled it out: "*Charlie-Oboe-William.*"

"You mean we hit a cow?"

"Uh huh."

"Did we hurt it?"

"We killed it—slightly."

I threw an overcoat over my bathrobe, and Eddie and I made our inspection with flashlights. There was the dead cow at the side of the road. It lay at the foot of a sign which read: "Beware of Cattle."

We turned our flashlights on the truck. Except for a dent in the left front fender and a slight gash in the radiator it showed no signs of damage. But something was dripping from under the hood.

"Probably water," I said, "from the radiator."

"Might be blood," Eddie suggested, hopefully.

He raised the hood and there was water trickling out of the torn radiator pipes. And the fan was bent like a pretzel.

Eddie took it all philosophically. "Next time," he said, "get a cow-catcher."

He drove the Clipper off the road with much grinding of fan on radiator and we parked for the night. Before we turned in we worked a ham in Eureka, Nevada who told us that the only place for our repairs was Reno. And Austin, Nevada, forty-four miles away, was the nearest bus line terminal.



Not a single vehicle passed us all that night. It seemed as if the Clipper and the dead cow were the only inhabitants of Nevada.

"I could send Eddie to Austin," I said the following morning.

"And leave us here in the middle of this desert—alone!"

Pat was already packing our overnight things in Horace's sea bag. Together we climbed on Junior. Eddie and Horace shoved us along the dusty road until the two-cylinder motor caught on.

"Have we enough gas?"

"Full up," said Eddie. "A whole gallon. That ought to get you to Austin—with a cup to spare."

With Pat clinging to my shoulders and the dust clinging to both of us, we arrived at last, grimy and saddle sore, at the little mining town of Austin. It looked like a set for a class B "horse opera."

The bus which was to carry us 177 miles over mountain roads to Reno was a converted hearse. It now had three rows of mourners' seats behind the driver. We piled Junior into the back seat and climbed in beside it.

The driver had long handle bar mustachios and drove with his left hand on the wheel and his right arm thrown back over the empty seat.

"He drives like Eddie," I said.

Pat added, "I hope we don't hit any cows."

When we started down the hairpin turns toward Reno, the driver shifted his tobacco into his cheek and turned his head around toward us. "Howdcha like *them* moun-



tains?" he asked, pointing with his free hand. "Ya don't get scenery like that outside Nevada."

We expected at every curve to plunge over the edge and become a part of the scenery; but the stagecoach seemed to know the road by heart. The driver didn't even have to look at it. He drove by the touch system. Most of the time it was touch and go.

We reached Reno, dazed and dusty. When we had unloaded Junior, we asked the driver for the best hotel.

"The Lodge," he told us, "is where them divorcees all stay."

We scooted up the palm-lined driveway of Reno's swankiest hotel with Pat huddled behind me on Junior and Horace's sea bag marked "U.S. Navy" in large blue stencilled letters, bringing up the rear. We parked our dusty scooter at the patio entrance, opposite the swimming pool. A dozen women in smart bathing suits were whiling away the boredom of a Reno divorce. When they caught sight of us they took off their sun glasses and squinted hard in our direction.

"Let them stare," Pat said with annoyance. "They probably never saw a woman come here with a *man* before."

The uniformed doorman made no move to help us with Junior. And in the lobby the bell boys, in white monkey jackets, continued to loll on their bench as we walked by, carrying our sea bag.

At the reception desk I reached for a pen to sign the register. The dapper little manager, in morning coat and

grey striped trousers, looked us over from head to foot.

He asked, "Have you a reservation?"

"No. Our trailer broke down near Austin." At the mention of trailer he shuddered.

"Sorry. We're filled up."

"Haven't you anything at all?" Pat asked plaintively.

He pursed his lips. "I might let you have one of our cheaper rooms—fourteen dollars a day." He looked inquiringly in my direction. I nodded.

"That's without meals," he explained. I nodded again.

"You'll have to pay in advance." He waved a graceful wrist in the direction of the Navy sea bag. "That's the house rule, when guests arrive without luggage." Half to himself he added: "We get the weirdest types here in Reno."

Our room was in the garret and must originally have been occupied by one of the least important of the hotel's many employees. A tiny gabled window looked out over the swimming pool.

"Anyway, it's better than Pete's cabins," I pointed out. "And we won't have to use sand. It's got running water."

While Pat was unpacking the sea bag I called the Chevrolet distributor. "A radio ham in Eureka phoned," he told me. "Our repair truck left this morning with a new radiator and fan. The job on the road will be finished by tonight, and your rig should arrive tomorrow."

The Clipper's arrival caused quite a stir. The doorman and the bell boys rushed forward eagerly. The divorcees raised up on their elbows to get a better look. From our garret window we saw the manager bustle out to welcome

the new arrival. When he saw Horace step from the Clipper in his smart cap and uniform he snapped his fingers.

"Porter," he called, "take the luggage."

"There is no luggage," Horace told him.

"Aren't the owners going to stay with us? I can give them a lovely suite."

"No. They're leaving now," said Horace, as Pat and I walked out of the hotel with the Navy sea bag slung over my shoulder.



## Chapter 17

### LOG OF THE CLIPPER

**A**T LAKE TAHOE, California, we parked under towering pines on the beautiful estate of friends. They had cocktails with us on the Clipper, and later we lunched on their terrace overlooking the lake. We were served by their three old Japanese butlers. A breeze had blown up on the lake and the butlers balanced their trays in one hand and held their hair with the other.

"Are your butlers seeing things, or am I?" Pat asked. "Myron must have put too much gin in those dry martinis."

Our hostess laughed. "Togo, Moto and Shugi are heirlooms. They've been in the family longer than I. Nobody



knows how old they are, or if they're triplets, as they claim."

The butlers had left the terrace.

"I was born in this house," she continued. "As far back as I can remember—and that's over fifty years—they have been here. They looked as old then as they do today." She smiled. "They still keep the keys to my jewel case and to Sidney's liquor cabinet. They treat us like children. They're as bald as Mt. Fuji and they think those wigs make them look younger. Perhaps they're afraid we might pension them off." She shook her head. "As if life could go on here without Togo and Moto and Shugi."

Eddie later contributed further details. The butlers had two wigs apiece sent from Japan every year. They were made in Tokyo from the hair of their own family. Eddie said they now had over a hundred. They sent them to be dry-cleaned in Reno and then stored them in moth balls. Sometimes they took their wigs off and mislaid them. Cook had found one in the refrigerator.

We drove the remaining 205 miles to San Francisco and the first leg of our transcontinental trip was over. We had covered 3,400 miles in 126 hours of driving time and used 560 gallons of gasoline. Our road speed had averaged twenty-seven miles per hour, our gasoline consumption six miles to the gallon.

We were fed to the teeth with hamburgers. Even Horace wanted a change of diet. So we moored the Clipper in the parking lot back of Joe DiMaggio's restaurant at Fisherman's Wharf. We had our meals sent aboard and ate

fresh cracked crab with a sauce I made up which later appeared on their menu as "*Sauce Continentale à la Clipper.*"

The Golden Gate International Exposition had just started on Treasure Island and we crossed the newly opened bridge to see it. We had crossed it before on our way down from Tahoe and the man at the toll gate had scratched his head. "If you was a bus," he puzzled, "I'd charge you two dollars. If you was a private car, the fare would be twenty-five cents."

"Why not split the difference?" He had followed my suggestion.

This time he was ready for us. "I got a ruling on you. You're a truck trailer and the fare is three bucks. And you're getting off easy. I shouldn't let you over at all."

They treated us better on Treasure Island. At the Administration Building the publicity director welcomed the Clipper and introduced Edgar Bergen who was making personal appearances.

"What have you in that suitcase?" I asked Bergen after he signed the guest book. He opened it and there was Charlie McCarthy, dressed in white tie and tails with a monocle in his eye.

"Please have Charlie sign the book." Bergen took Charlie out of the case and propped him on his knee.

"What do you think of the Clipper, Charlie?" he asked. "It's just like home, isn't it? That's what I wrote in the book."

"Gosh," Charlie quipped. "I didn't know you could write."

"Well, it *is* like home, isn't it, Charlie?"

"It's better," Charlie piped up. "Home's terrible. In this thing, even you look good, Edgar."

"Well, what will I put down in the book?"

"Just write: 'love and kisses.' You write the 'love,' I'll write the 'kisses.'"

Bergen took the pen in his left hand and signed 'Charlie McCarthy.' Then he wrote 'love' and, holding the pen in Charlie's hand, he made a string of X's.

"Did I spell them right?" asked Charlie.

We didn't want to stay too long in San Francisco. My two children, by a former marriage, were in camp and I felt sure they were breathlessly awaiting the arrival of the Clipper.

My son Lud, age ten, was in camp at Goleta, California. Every boy who had seen the trailer—age seven to seventy—had been enthralled. I was sure that Lud and his Cub Scouts would feel the same. We rather expected to be met by a small-fry Guard of Honor.

The camp, however, was deserted, except for an old Chinese who did the cooking. "Boys out clamming," he told us. I thought he meant climbing and I looked toward the mountains.

"No, clamming—in water." He pointed toward the sea.

We drove the Clipper down to the beach where a group of small boys were scrambling over low rocks in the surf. The scoutmaster spied us and I walked down and explained my visit.

"I'll call them back," he said. "It's time for lunch."



He clapped his hands sharply and, in a voice like a drill master, cried to the scurrying boys: "All right, men, bring in your trophies. On the double now, men. It's time for lunch."

Lud was the last to arrive. His arms were filled with large clams and abalone shells. Clutched by one claw he held a live crab. When he saw me he gave me a clammy kiss and hurried off to join the other Cubs.

After lunch came forestry exercises, including lectures on the art of making fire by rubbing sticks together. Lud was excused by the scoutmaster and allowed to stay with us in the Clipper but he fidgeted impatiently the whole time. Nothing on board interested him. Even the radio failed to hold his attention though I contacted Australia on my first call. My son thought the whole thing was too silly for words and said so. He had brought his crab with him and put it in my bar refrigerator "so it won't smell." Now he sat glumly in my swivel chair polishing his abalone shell. When the time came for our departure he gave me another clammy kiss and rushed off to join his friends. The crab in the refrigerator was forgotten. Pat found it two days later, after we had begun to wonder what had died in the bar.

My daughter Lynn, aged twelve, was equally deflating. Her camp was a few miles farther down the Coast. Lynn and her girl friends were playing baseball when the Clipper arrived. We parked right in back of home plate. Lynn was catching and ignored our arrival. The girls wore khaki shorts and striped T-shirts. Lynn's were the dirtiest. She must have been sliding bases.



We watched from the flying bridge until they finished the inning.

"Now," I told Pat, "she'll come running over with all her teammates. She is probably dying to show off the Clipper."

Lynn did nothing of the sort. She had pulled off her catcher's mask and was now playing coach and yelling at the top of her lungs to rattle the opposing pitcher. When she looked toward the batter's box she could hardly have missed seeing Pat and me sitting up there in our private bleachers. She gave no sign of recognition.

Pat laid her hand consolingly on my arm. "I was the same way at her age. She wants to be just like the rest of the gang—not different. Why don't you buy them all ice cream and *lure* them into the Clipper."

Before the cones arrived, one of the girls came aboard. She was Lynn's opposite number, catcher of the opposing team. A fast foul had slipped past her in our direction. They were not playing ladylike soft ball. A regular big league baseball had come crashing through the screen on the flying bridge window and missed my head by inches. The rival catcher had dashed through the Clipper door and was down on her knees searching wildly under the lounge sofa for the missing ball.

"They'll score! They'll score four runs if I don't get it right away!" she yelled wildly. "The bases are loaded and it's even-up." She dragged out my swivel chair, pulled the dinette table off its hinges and started tearing at the radio cabinet.

Pat found the ball under the flying bridge couch. "Here

it is," she said, holding it up. "I'll throw it down to you if you promise to send Lynn right in to see us."

The catcher jumped on top of the bar and grabbed the ball.

"Lynn can't come," she screamed as she raced out of the Clipper. "She's up to bats right now!"

It was the end of the ninth inning before Horace returned with five dripping bags full of ice cream cones. Lynn's team had won; and, flushed with victory, at last she took note of our presence. At least they noticed the ice cream. Bats, gloves and equipment were left strewn on the field while all members of the rival teams trooped aboard. Lynn did a perfunctory job of introductions; Horace passed the cones. With much dripping over our hand-blocked linens, the young ladies licked at the ice cream. When the last drop was gone, they sucked their fingers. Lynn also emphasized her proprietary rights by wiping her grimy hands on the padded pig skin.

The girls thereupon marched grimly out of the Clipper. "Thank you very much," they muttered in unison. "We're sorry we can't stay but we're playing a double header."

Lynn was the last to depart. She threw a disdainful look at the Clipper's gleaming interior as she kissed me goodbye.

"I don't know *what* my girl friends are going to think of all this. Really, Father, how *could* you be so conspicuous?"



## Chapter 18

### SLOW BURN

**I**N HOLLYWOOD on the Sunset Strip we parked in front of the *Cock 'N Bull*, Hollywood's symbolical restaurant, and went in for dinner. As we were finishing, a short, stocky man with military bearing came over to our table. "I am Prince Michael Romanoff," he introduced himself, bowing stiffly from the waist. "I have observed your palatial palanquin and decided that you are people worthy of my notice."

The "Prince" was new to Hollywood, but I had heard of him in New York when he was plain Harry Gerguson. He was reputed to have escaped from Ellis Island by swimming to Jersey and lived off the cuff in Brooklyn (a frayed cuff at that), while dodging the U.S. Immigration officials. When they caught up with him he had

skipped Manhattan and headed appropriately for Hollywood, that paradise of pretenders. Now, as an extra in the movies, he was proving himself to be no real aristocrat by paying off his tailor—in installments.

When we took "Prince" Mike on the Clipper he stuck his bullet-shaped head and bulbous nose into every cranny. His mustache quivered as he surveyed the contents of the Dunhill humidor. His bristly hair stood up when he reached the wine cellar.

"Help yourself, 'Prince,'" I urged him. My invitation was not needed. The "Prince" was already down on hands and knees and immersed up to his waist in the interior of my cellarette. With that faultless taste which has since distinguished his famous *Romanoff's* restaurant, Mike emerged clutching a bottle of the best, my last magnum of *Lanson*.

"Now," said "Prince" Mike, after the champagne was served and he sat on the couch in regal comfort with the largest of my Romeo and Juliet's firmly held in place by his thick lower lip, "it's my turn to play host." He reached into his pocket and handed me an engraved invitation, first writing our names in the space reserved for that purpose.

A heavily embossed imperial crown surmounted by a large "R" was engraved at the top of the sheet. The handmade paper rattled richly as I read out the royal announcement to Pat.

"To discharge his social obligations, past and future, we have received commands from his Imperial Highness, Prince Michael Romanoff to invite Mr. and Mrs. Myron Zobel to a buffet supper



on Saturday evening, June 10th, at the Clover Club. Guests will please bring their own liquor and fee the servants."

When I finished reading, "Prince" Mike looked at me over the long grey ash which he had carefully preserved on the end of his cigar and asked in the rich British accent which he had acquired in Brooklyn, "I say, old boy, what does one do to own a royal chariot of these proportions?"

"Well," I told him, "*my* racket is advertising and, quite recently, television production."

The "Prince" raised his eyebrows and regarded the long ash on his cigar. "Whom have you under contract?"

I named Judy Holliday and some of the others whom Telecast Productions, Inc. had signed up before I left New York. "And," I added, "also the High Priestess of High Jinks, Elsa Maxwell."

The "Prince" looked up so suddenly that the long ash fell off onto the carpet. "Elsa Maxwell?" he exclaimed with contempt, "That *phony*!"

When the champagne was finished and Mike had warmed, sniffed and consumed two large napoleon inhalers of old cognac, I handed him the Clipper's guest register. He looked over all the names carefully before deciding to act as co-signer. Then, with a royal flourish that took a whole page to itself, he inscribed his full and phony title: "Prince Michael Alexandrovitch Dmitry Obolensky Romanoff." The comment he added was: "To a man with more imagination than I have."

We were unable to attend Mike's party as we had to start back east the following night. I had promised to take Schult and his friends on a stag party to the Ken-

tucky Derby and *Life* was sending a photographer along to cover the story.

The next afternoon found us parked at the "Farmer's Market" laying in supplies from this gourmet's paradise. We bought Persian melons, cracked crab, pecan pies, filets and fresh asparagus. At "Curl's" I even found my favorite whole Hungarian goose liver—straight from Manfred Weiss in Budapest. Our refrigerators bulged. This time our visit to the Painted Desert would be made in comfort. We would park in front of "Pete's Grill and Cabins" and bring civilization to his very doorstep.

Exhausted from shopping, we returned to the Town House to await our midnight departure.

"Visiting hours are over," I told Eddie. "Why don't you get some sleep." Eddie turned in and we prepared to do the same. Horace stood outside to ward off visitors.

"Isn't it grand," I said to Pat as I loosened my tie, "to be alone for a change."

She agreed, "It's been like living in a fish bowl."

"Or a boidcage, to quote Popp."

There was a knock at the door.

I called out to Horace, "The answer is 'No.'"

"This case is special, sir," Horace pleaded.

"What's 'special' about it?"

"This gentleman built the truck."

"Horace, he's pulling your leg. The truck was built on an assembly line."

"He built that too."

"What's his name?"

"Alfred Pritchard Sloan, Jr."

Pat yawned. "So what. Who's he?"

"Just the president of General Motors and our biggest advertiser," I said, as I retied my tie.

Mr. Sloan's interest in the Clipper was flattering.

"We're building a job like this for a chap named Larry Thaw," he told me.

"I know."

Sloan looked about him admiringly. "You seem to have everything Thaw has, except a two-way radio." I showed him the goose neck where my transmitter was built in with only the meters showing.

"We've had plenty of headaches with Thaw's job," Sloan said, as he signed the guest register and was preparing to leave. "If any bugs develop in yours I'd be happy to help."

"I'll call on you," I said, "via short wave radio."

The bugs started developing in swarms as soon as we headed east. Eddie's log tells the story:

"Broke trailer spring 2 miles west of Beaumont, Calif."

"Broke Chevrolet brake spring at Holbrook, Ariz."

"Kohler Light plant lacked power in altitude and boiled over at Continental Divide."

"Facing tore loose on mountains."

"Drove 83 miles without using clutch."

"Sayre, Oklahoma Truck clock burnt out and ran down batteries."

"Right rear spring shackle turns over on bumps."

"Spark plug wires came loose due to vibration in Pittsburgh."

"Trailer brake supports broke and had to be welded in Trenton, New Jersey."

These were some of the bugs that bit us as we recrossed the continent. One bug, however, made no impression on



Eddie's log; but it left a lasting one on my sacroiliac. The egg-crate suspension suspended before we reached the California border.

My radio came to the rescue. A ham near Boston connected me via land telephone with my office. I heard Mr. Immergut reluctantly agree to accept the collect charges. "Dear Mr. Sloan," I began when Miss Freeman took the phone, "This letter is being dictated via short wave radio while doing fifty miles an hour near . . ." I went on to request that instructions for repairing our egg-crate suspension be airmailed to the Chevrolet distributor in Phoenix, Arizona.

When we reached there the manager was waiting for us.

"This is Mr. Bell, president of the company that built your suspension," he said. "He flew out from Buffalo to help you."

Mr. Bell crawled under the rear axle.

"Just a cotter pin sheered off," he explained from beneath the truck as he inserted a new one. "Too bad," he said, as he crawled right out and dusted himself off. "You could have fixed it with a bobby pin."

My nerves were twanging like banjo strings as we headed north for Adamana. The batteries were nearly dead, the generator was kaput, the refrigerators hadn't worked since we left the "Farmer's Market." The filet steaks had started to grow beards, the goose liver would be runny and the champagne warm.

But I was still determined to revisit the Painted Desert



and park on Pete's doorstep. This act, I felt, would bring full circle the epic of the Continental Clipper.

We parked on the edge of the Painted Desert within sight of "Pete's Grill and Cabins." And we dressed for dinner, like Englishmen on safari. In the gathering gloom Pete stared at my white shirt front as if he had seen a ghost.

The lights in the Clipper were so dim that we went to bed right after dinner. We told Eddie to call us a little before dawn. One glimpse of the sun rising over the desert would complete the ceremony and we could be off.

We were awakened in what seemed to be the middle of the night by weird noises under our open flying bridge window. I pulled the blankets over my head while Pat rose on her elbows and looked out. The beam of a flashlight swooped the whole length of the Clipper.

"There's someone out there!" Pat whispered hoarsely. "I think it's Pete."

I uncovered one eye and peered out cautiously. Suddenly the light flashed straight into the face of the intruder under the window—not four feet from us. The face wore the grinning mask of an Indian war god. The hair on its head was straight and black and seemed to be standing on end, like my own. A curdling cry came out of the mouth of the mask. It was partly the howl of a desert coyote and partly the wail of a banshee.

Pat nudged me. "I know that voice," she whispered. "I recognize those trousers, too."

"It's Eddie!" I gasped.

He pulled off the mask and the wig.

"Where did you get them?" Pat asked, laughing.

Eddie grinned. "I beat up an Indian papoose and took the mask away from him."

"And the wig?"

"Oh, that's Togo's. He left it in the men's room."

By the time we reached Pennsylvania we were fed up with luxury travel. We had just finished a slow and painful climb over the hills and were parked in front of a radio shop in Chambersburg. Eddie was buying more tubes for my radio and Horace was shopping for another air mattress. Pat and I locked up the Clipper and got out to stretch our legs. We were a block down the street when a man came running up and pulled at my arm.

"Hey," he asked, puffing hard, "is that your trailer?"

"Yes," I told him. "I plead guilty. That's the cross I bear."

"Well," said the stranger, "you won't have to bear it much longer."

"Why? Are you planning to buy it?"

"Is it insured?" the stranger asked.

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Plenty. It's on fire."

Pat and I turned and looked back. A thick cloud of black smoke rose from the galley chimney.

"Aren't you going to turn in an alarm?" the stranger asked me. "There's the box on the corner."

Pat and I exchanged glances. The Clipper was fully insured.

"I think we can handle this by ourselves," I told him. We walked slowly back and bumped into Eddie as he rushed out of the radio shop, his arms loaded with tubes.

"Be careful of those tubes, Eddie," I called, as he dashed for the galley door.

"It's locked," Eddie cried, pulling at the handle. "We'll have to get an axe." He tried the other door and that was also locked.

"Right," I agreed. "Get an axe. See if you can borrow one from that hardware store I saw two blocks down the street. Leave a deposit if you have to."

Eddie looked at me. "Haven't you got a key?"

I felt in my pockets. "Must have left it aboard."

Clerks and customers from the radio shop were rushing out to help. Two mechanics arrived with crowbars and a hatchet.

"Hold it," I said, "here comes Horace."

Horace's arms were loaded with packages. "The Clipper will be a total loss," I whispered to Pat, "by the time he gets anything done."

Horace surprised us. He had suddenly remembered he had left the oven on. He dropped his packages in the gutter, pulled a key from the pocket of his uniform and dashed into the galley before I had finished speaking. Inside, he hurled the glass ball fire extinguisher at the stove. A bucket chain brigade by now was throwing water into the galley where they soon extinguished the flames and nearly extinguished Horace.

When Pat and I climbed sadly back aboard our white elephant, we found only a smudge on the galley ceiling, a



small section of charred plywood and a cleaning bill for Horace's uniform to report to the insurance underwriter. Now it was our turn to do a slow burn as we headed for home.

Life in our little Greenwich apartment seemed flat after the adventures of our transcontinental trip. Everything was so spacious, so stationary and so simple. Light, heat and water presented no problems. It was all too easy. So the following Friday we boarded the Clipper again and headed for Manhasset, Long Island to spend the weekend with friends. We were ideal house guests: we brought our own house with us. All we needed was a place to park.

Returning from Manhasset we ran into a traffic snarl. I asked Eddie on the intercom, "What's going on?" He leaned out of his truck window and repeated my question to the liveried chauffeur in the limousine below.

"Some sort of a shindig taking place up the hill. Someone named Thaw is christening a caravan—whatever that is."

I remembered the date. "This," I told Pat, "must be the place Thaw told me to drop in. We can park the Clipper outside the gate and I'll run over and take a look."

But the line of limousines had started moving and we were in the middle. There was no turning out.

The estate stood on a wooded hillside surrounded by clipped velvet lawns. The cavalcade of chauffeur-driven cars edged in between the wide wrought-iron gates, with the Clipper between them like tugs around an ocean liner. In front of the eight-car garage a large turnabout was filled with maneuvering motors. It looked like the



milling traffic in Columbus Circle. Beyond the broad driveway that stretched toward the house could be seen the Thaw caravan of trailer, trucks and passenger cars, parked on wide planks laid out across the lawn.

As Eddie edged the Clipper cautiously forward, a cluster of uniformed chauffeurs rushed out from the gate house to shepherd us through the maze. More planks were brought and we were led across them to a spot on the lawn behind the Thaw equipage.

Before I could get out and follow the crowd being shown through Thaw's caravan, the door of our Clipper opened and a friendly group of guests came in for a look.

"I like your trailer better than Peggy's," Princess Muralt said to Pat, "but for heaven's sake, don't tell her I said so."

"Don't worry," Dwight Fiske reassured her. "Peggy won't come near here. Today is her Big Show and she's probably all steamed up to see you draw such a crowd outside the Main Tent."

When we brought out our collection of his records, he scratched his autograph on them with a phonograph needle. His address he entered in our guest register as "Bombay and all points east." Maury H. B. Paul also signed, but reserved comment for his Cholly Knickerbocker column in the *N.Y. Journal American*.

When the guests had left, Pat and I followed the group being shown by Thaw through his Flagship.

"No glare or rattling blinds for us," Thaw announced as he grasped the ivory handle of one of the circular windows and cranked the silver arm. The polaroid pane

changed from transparent daylight to a pinkish twilight and finally to opaque lavender.

"This is our salon," said Thaw, starting with the first of the four rooms in the trailer. He indicated the recessed desk, folding bar and two-way radio. "All of our five units are equipped with short-wave transmitters to keep them in touch with this Flagship and each other." He pointed in the direction of the five ton General Motors truck that pulled the trailer. "Up there," he said, "forward of the salon, is the engine room. We have three 1,000-watt generators to provide ample power for the concealed lighting system and our host of electric pumps, blowers, refrigerators, radio and other gadgets too numerous to mention. And, of course," he added, "there's a separate four cylinder engine to run our large air-conditioning plant. We don't need batteries because everything is soundproofed behind aluminium bulkheads."

Thaw led us back to the second room. It was the galley. It had a full-size electric refrigerator, a stove and ample space to store several days' supplies of canned goods. A sink with hot and cold running water had a neatly recessed heater. "We carry one hundred gallons of water," Thaw explained, "under automatic pressure."

The third room was the bath. "Not just a shower, you understand," Thaw said, as he opened the door. "Also a regular bathtub." He laughed. "Peggy refused to go without it."

He led on. "Our bedroom and dressing room," he said. "We have more closet space than even Peggy knows what to do with." He pointed to the wall. "There's a safe be-

hind here for Peggy's jewelry." He indicated a mirrored vanity. "An original by Arden," he explained, "with refrigerated cabinets for all Peggy's creams."

I turned to see Pat's reaction. She had quietly withdrawn. I opened the rear door of the caravan to follow her. It was four feet above ground with a step that was retracted. I stepped out into space and landed on my face in full view of the laughing crowd.

In the Clipper, alone, with our rattling blinds pulled tight, I found Pat.

"Let's get out of here," she said, and I nodded. But before I could pick up the intercom, the door was opened without knocking by a liveried footman. He stuck his head in and delivered his brief message. "Mrs. Thaw wants you to get this thing off the estate."

Eddie had the motor running before the footman could pull his head out. Eddie was a ham, and hams catch on quick. He was a skillful driver too. He had backed the Clipper out of tighter spots than those two planks on the grass. It must have been his haste to obey Mrs. Thaw's command that made him jack-knife our truck and trailer and tear those awful gashes in the close-clipped lawn.



## Chapter 19

### MILLIONAIRES ON THE LOOSE

**T**RUDI MERCIER called me the following week.

"*Life* is all set to go to the Kentucky Derby on the Continental Clipper," she announced. "They've phoned Colonel Matt Wynn. He's the Big Wheel at Churchill Downs. Arrangements are being made to park the Clipper in the middle of the race course so you can watch the Derby from the *inside* of the track. That will give our photographer some new angle shots." She paused to draw breath. "We've assigned Wallace Kirkland, one of our ace cameramen, to shoot the story. He'll meet you at the Schult plant in Elkhart with all his equipment." She sighed enviously. "You boys sure will have a time for yourselves in



Louisville. I'll bet you'll paint that town red. Well, have fun. But don't do anything I wouldn't do."

That was the trouble. We didn't.

Kirkland met us on schedule. He had a hopeful smirk on his long thin face, and four cameras were slung over his shoulders. The rest of his luggage consisted of four battered suitcases. They were solidly plastered with travel stickers from hotels and steamship lines that covered the globe. He looked like a walking Baedeker. When he opened the cases they seemed to be filled with nothing but flash bulbs and film. I don't recall seeing any shirts or socks, or even a toothbrush.

I introduced Kirkland to Schult and his party. They were solid, successful midwestern businessmen. All were married—and looked it. Kirkland regarded them with a jaundiced eye. It was obvious he had hoped for something gaudier. But he was a seasoned staff photographer, with a brilliant reputation for licking tough assignments. I saw by the way he set out that he was determined to squeeze some drama out of this one, though it might be harder than getting blood from a turnip. Before we started, he unlimbered his equipment and began casing the Clipper's interior for angle shots.

He found one beneath my radio cabinet. By squatting underneath the desk and leaning his head back against the wine cellar, he could shoot up from the floor and catch our party of tame tycoons knee-high.

"It makes them look bigger than life," he whispered to me, "and twice as uninteresting." He fitted a flash bulb into its holder and cocked his camera.

"Let's go!" Kirkland directed from his lair. "Pay no attention to me. And for God's sake don't look at the camera. Just act natural, if you know how to. It ain't easy." After he had made his opening shots he turned to me.

"Now ring for your steward," he ordered, as he climbed to the flying bridge and stood on top of the couch. When Horace appeared through the sliding door, he looked up in bewilderment at Kirkland, clinging from the rail support.

The photographer called to him: "Okay, big boy. You can bring in the champagne now. And the chorus girls. Remember *Life* expects every man to do his duty!"

Horace's jaw fell. "There is no champagne, sir. Only beer. But it's in *quart* bottles," he added, hopefully.

"No champagne! No chorus girls! No gambling! What kind of a stag party is this, anyway?" Kirkland sighed in mock dismay; but he continued taking his candid camera shots while he talked. "All right. Let's get out the tiddly-winks."

"There'll be gambling all right," Schult reassured him with a laugh. "We always play draw poker on the way to the Derby."

"Two-bit limit, I'll bet," Kirkland said with feigned enthusiasm.

"Oh, no!" Schult told him. "Penny ante."

Poor Kirkland suffered on that trip down to Louisville. It was not his idea of what a stag party should be like.

"*Life* ain't going to go for this," he warned me more than once. "They want action, drama, suspense." It was clear that Kirkland was not appeased by the big square

diamond and fraternal rings. Even the silver arm bands and the ties adorned in blazing colors with running horses and nude chorus girls in champagne glasses left him cold.

"*Life* expects a hot story, reeking with riotous living," he complained to me. "And those guys just sit around with their coats off and their sleeve garters showing and drink beer and play penny ante!"

Kirkland was my bunk buddy that night on the flying bridge, and during his restless tossings he embroidered the theme. When at last he fell into fitful slumber he moaned in his sleep.

Next morning at Churchill Downs I hoped, for his sake, things might be better. But it was Race Day. Everyone was milling about; and in all that turmoil Kirkland could not locate Colonel Matt Wynn or anyone else authorized to fulfill *Life's* promises. The Clipper was barred from the track and the guards only laughed when Kirkland flashed his press card and demanded its admittance.

"Take it around to the stables," they kidded us, "maybe you can park it in the paddock—if it doesn't scare the horses."

We were finally obliged to use a trailer park a mile from the track. We also missed the Kentucky Colonels' dinner and breakfast and the special box which *Life* had planned to provide. Poor Kirkland was reduced to photographing Horace at the galley range, cooking, of all things, hamburgers.

By race time Kirkland had dragged his four cases of equipment and his cameras from the trailer park to the track and was ready and waiting for us at the \$100 win-



dow. But Schult and party were down at another wicket, buying two-dollar tickets on the favorites—to show.

To please Kirkland, I stood in line with the \$100 bettors and he took pictures until my turn came at the window. Then I joined my guests and plunked down my two dollars with theirs.

Kirkland also set up his equipment on the Turf Club steps. “Here,” he said, handing me a program to hold in one hand and a mint julep to hold in the other. He borrowed a large pair of racing binoculars from a bystander and slung them over my shoulder. “Look nonchalant,” he directed. “As if you didn’t give a damn whether you win or lose.” He cocked his camera. “That’s good,” he said, as I assumed a bored expression. “But take that two-dollar ticket out of your hat band; or turn it around so the price won’t show in the picture.”

After the race, Kirkland packed his equipment and got ready to fly back to New York. He had taken 200 pictures and filled three notebooks with the backstairs chit-chat *Life* calls “Research.”

“The background was swell,” Kirkland confided to me as he packed. “It was the foreground that was lousy.” His parting words as he left were addressed to all of us.

“Thanks for the buggy ride. It’s all been just too, too perfect. Hottest story I ever covered. It ought to make *Life’s* cover—the back one!”





## Chapter 20

### PAT UPSETS THE APPLECART

**P**AT HAD ARRANGED to meet me with the Cord in Rockefeller Plaza when I returned from the Derby. That would permit us to drive back to Greenwich in our car while Eddie took the Clipper to his garage in Long Island City for a "few minor adjustments." Apparently Eddie misunderstood my instructions; for, as soon as he had parked the Clipper in the Plaza, he took his mobile radio under his arm and caught the crosstown bus.

"I can't leave the Clipper standing here all night," I told Pat when she drove up in the Cord and found Eddie gone. "I'll have to drive it across Fiftieth Street and find a parking lot on First Avenue."

"Who?" Pat asked pointedly. "You?"

"I suppose you think I can't do it. If Eddie can drive this thing, so can I."

"Under the Third Avenue 'El'?"

"Under the East River, if need be." I hoisted myself up into the cab-over-engine. "I'll lead. You bring up the rear."

"Drive carefully," Pat called from behind the wheel of the Cord. "Don't hit anything."

I pulled the Clipper well out into the center of the Plaza and then into the stream of traffic going east on Fiftieth Street. It wasn't as bad as I had imagined. Everyone gave the Clipper a wide berth. The main trick was to hit each intersection in tune with the lights so as to start at the flash of green. That was the only way to get the whole Clipper across the street before the lights changed to red. The unsolicited coaching I received from the sidewalks was drowned in the rattle and clanking of truck gears and engine.

I drove the whole way in low gear though I had six forward speeds to choose from. I also left on the emergency brake to check speed. When I passed under the Third Avenue 'El,' I hardly heard the clatter of the train over my head. I knew now why Eddie had worked his "rare ones" with cans on.

At First Avenue I turned right and found a parking lot a few feet from the corner. The attendant backed all the cars out from the end of the lot so I could pull the Clipper straight in. Then I climbed down from the cab.

"How did you like them apples?" I called proudly, as

I rounded the rear of the Clipper where I expected to find Pat waiting in the Cord.

It was a most unfortunate choice of words. Pat hadn't liked "them apples" at all. The right front wheel of the Cord was over the curb and the cream colored fender was newly accordion-pleated and deeply imbedded in an Italian fruit vendor's pushcart. His apples lay squashed all over the sidewalk, except for a few of the juicier ones which still clung to the peddler and to Pat as they stood amid the wreckage, engaged in bilingual strife.

"He refused to pull over when I honked my horn!" Pat cried indignantly as I approached.

"You no maka da sign wid da hand," the Neapolitan exclaimed.

"I maka da sign wid da fender," Pat cried, her eyes blazing. "I taught him a lesson he won't forget in a hurry."

"It's all right," I assured her, as I paid for the damaged cart and its contents. "Our insurance will cover the costs."

"I thought you had fifty dollars deductible," Pat said. "They didn't pay for the other fender that time the taxi wouldn't move."

"I sent them a check last week for full coverage," I explained. "I figured it was a sound investment."

I was pleased to learn that Kirkland's dire predictions had not come true. Shortly after the Derby, Trudi Mercier arrived with the layouts for *Life's* story. They covered a double page spread and a half page run-over, complete

with text, captions, blurbs and the title: "*Life* Goes to the Derby on the Continental Clipper."

"Here are the releases for you to sign," she said, as she laid them on my desk. "And here's where you O.K. the story."

I spread out the pages. "Read fast," she urged me. "I've got to rush this story out by plane. The issue goes to bed tonight and hits the stands next Thursday."

It was a swell story. I read it fast and signed even faster. I knew a million dollars worth of publicity when it hit me in the teeth. Pat and I were already thinking of unloading the Clipper and *Life's* story would come in mighty handy.

The following Thursday when I got home Pat showed me the new issue of *Life*. I thumbed excitedly through the pages. There was not a word about the Clipper. But there *was* a trailer story—seven full pages of it. It was entitled: "LAND YACHT TRIP. Trailer takes the Thaws from Paris to India." I read it in bursts.

"With leisure and means to satisfy their wanderlust . . . with a flagship they designed themselves . . . a roomy land yacht, completely air-conditioned . . . cost \$80,000 . . . accompanied by mechanical engineer loaned by G.M. . . . six Indian servants in immaculate white dress uniforms with blue and white turbans . . . a cook, two personal boys, three drivers trained by G.M. in Bombay . . . Hollywood cameraman . . . escort over the Ancient Silk Route to Baghdad . . . the Khyber Pass . . . the Gardens of Shalimar . . . white marble Taj Mahal . . . the Ganges . . . hunting tigers in shadow of Himalayas . . . state guests of nine maharajas . . . caravan parked in marble courtyards . . . lived like potentates in princely guest palaces . . . took



quarter million feet of color movie film of pageants, betrothal and wedding durbars and their hosts at polo and pig-sticking."

And what pictures accompanied the glowing text—forty-three of them. Thaw and the boy king of Iraq. Thaw in a Bedouis headdress. Thaw with the Maharaja of Patiala inspecting the Flagship. Peggy and the Gaekwar of Baroda on palace lawn. Peggy refusing delicacy of lamb's eye at Baghdad nomad feast. Peggy and Maharaja of Jaipur. Peggy with gun and helmet and foot on dead tiger.

It was quite a story.


"And that's not all," said Pat. "They'll sell that damn thing to some Maharaja over there for a million dollars. See if they don't!"



Book Five

# WHITE ELEPHANT ON OUR HANDS

DATE	NAME
	With
	Royal
	wishes
	to
	Myron G.
	Zobel
	O. SOGLOW



[From the Guest Register]

OTTO SOGLOW







## Chapter 21

### RENTAL IN REVERSE

**B**Y THE FOLLOWING WINTER it began to look as if Mr. Immergut's predictions were going to come true. Perhaps we had not grown tired of the Clipper; but we certainly had tired of the expenses. I couldn't afford to keep both Pat and the Clipper; and I felt that Pat had priority rights. The Clipper would have to go.

"Why don't you try to charter it out for a trip to Florida?" asked Pat. "You could advertise it in *Yachting*."

I acted on her suggestion; but I chose the *New Yorker*. We were thrilled when an answer came from a man named Ullman.

"I'm producing a series of travelogs called 'This is America'," he explained over the phone. "Our next sub-

ject is Arizona and I thought your trailer might save me money. How does your Clipper work in the desert?"

I remembered Pete and the Painted Desert. Happily, I forgot the details. "Why," I assured him, "the Clipper was built for the desert. In fact it was in Arizona that I got the inspiration."

"Fine. I'll bring my wife and the director and cameraman along and we'll take a trial spin. If that works out, we can discuss the charter fee. I'll want it for at least three months."

It was arranged to make the test run in Long Island City. It seemed like a wonderful choice. I remembered nothing there but long level stretches of road. Flat as the palm of your hand. And the Clipper was hell on hills. Besides, it was Arizona he was chartering it for; and who ever heard of a hill in Arizona!

We called Eddie and told him to go over to the garage and check the motor.

"Already checked it," said Eddie.

"How does she sound?"

"Like a cold in the throat."

"Well, tune her up as well as you can. We're taking some prospects for a spin this afternoon. If all goes well you may get a return engagement in Arizona. You can take your mask along and scare hell out of the Indians."

Pat and Horace and Eddie and I spent the morning in the Long Island City garage trying to bring the Clipper back to its former glory. When the Ullman party arrived we had it parked out in the sunlight. We showed them through and paused to give them a chance to "enthuse."

That's what our guests always did. We forgot that these were paying guests.

"Look at that scratch on the bar top," said the director's wife.

"The lounge has a rip here under the arm," the sharp-eyed cameraman pointed out.

"This upstairs couch is only leatherette, not real leather," said the director. "The cracks show plainly."

"Well, anyway," Mr. Ullman conceded, "it's good enough to rough it out in Arizona. It ought to save plenty of shooting days if it's got speed."

"Yes," I agreed. "Speed's the thing." We were sitting up on the flying bridge couch. My prospect was at the window and I was beside him, with the director and cameraman on my right. I reached across for the intercom. "Let her rip, Eddie," I said, "and don't spare the horses."

Eddie and I had already laid out our route and there wasn't even a one per cent grade in the whole of it. We took off with a slight jerk.

"My," said the director's wife, as she grabbed the dinette table, "if I had been eating, it might have spilled in my lap."

Pat shook her head. "Can't remember anything like that ever happening before."

"Most unusual," I agreed. "Eddie must have let in the clutch too fast."

We were out on a nice smooth stretch of open road when our prospect spoke again.

"There's a hill," said Ullman, pointing way off to the right. "Let's try her out." We were doing a smooth forty

and I hoped I could stall him off till we passed the turn off. But Ullman was a movie producer, and producers are hard to stall. He grabbed the intercom. "Turn right at the corner," he commanded. Eddie must have thought it was my voice and that I had changed the route. The noise in the truck made it hard to tell. He did a fast five-wheel turn at the corner:—our equivalent of a two-wheel turn. I held my breath as we approached the hill. It was a short cut that led back to Long Island City and traffic increased as we neared it. As we rounded the bend, I saw what we were getting into. A one-way road led over the mountain. And now there was no turning back. Cars were piling up behind us; and, as our speed decreased, the clamor of their horns grew louder.

Ullman and party said nothing. But their silence rang in my ears. Only when the Clipper's forward motion ceased altogether did my prospect find voice.

"Now," he said, with a sarcasm only movie producers can achieve, "I suppose we all get out and push."

"That," I replied, "is quite unnecessary. Eddie has already found a solution." What Eddie had found was a small jut in the road, obviously designed to give motorists a view down from the mountain. He warned the cars behind us, and backed into the open space.

The rear end of the Clipper hung over the edge of the mountain. Horace came in, white and trembling.

"There's nothing under the rear galley window but nothing," he informed us.

We sat tense and speechless while Eddie slowly eased



the Clipper downhill, against the one-way traffic. Soon he was radiator to radiator with the oncoming cars.

"Does he expect them to open up for him like the Red Sea did for Moses?" the director asked with the irony men of his ilk keep in reserve for occasions like this.

"Don't worry about Eddie," I reassured him. "He is a very resourceful driver."

"He has to be," said Mr. Ullman, "with a thing like this."

Eddie went into reverse, and painfully, the Clipper backed up the hill. Our view from the flying bridge had changed. We were being shoved backwards. Eddie drove with the help of the rear view mirror, while I looked ahead through the rear galley window and coached him over the intercom.

The director's wife and Mrs. Ullman cowered in the lounge with their eyes closed, but the men resumed their seats on the reversed couch and suffered the ordeal in stony silence. At the end of the one-way road they descended in a body. Our farewells were brief and frigid. No mention was made of Arizona.

Fortunately for us, the *New Yorker* ad produced two charters. The first was to Hal Kemp who went on tour with it for seven weeks, together with his musicians and canary. Unfortunately my charter did not cover tires and the cost to me of the ones he blew equalled the charter fee. When I pointed this out, he said I wasn't the only one who lost money on the tour. His musicians were so

shaken up and his canary so out of voice that he had canceled the last half of the bookings.

My last charter was to a lighthearted and "heavy-sugared" young man named Lex Thompson. He had just inherited a steel mill and six million dollars in cash; and we felt that, at last, the Clipper had found its rightful owner.

However, Thompson was cool to the idea of purchase and even evaded my casual suggestion that we share ownership and expenses. "I just want it for laughs," Lex explained, as we arranged for a summer charter. This time my charter provided for him to pay all expenses, including tires, and also the salary of Eddie and Horace who remained with the Clipper as crew.

We left Lex to wrestle with our stubborn and unpredictable white elephant. The night before his charter started, Pat and I took a slow boat to China. Those are not just the words to a song. We actually spent Lex's charter time—and money—in Shanghai. We were gone three months. When we got back, I called him up to hear his inventory of complaints. To my surprise his voice was cheerful.

"I had a helluva lot of laughs," Lex told me.

"But didn't anything go wrong? No blowouts, dead batteries, turned-over shackles—things like that?"

"Sure," Thompson agreed goodnaturedly. "All those things. That was part of the fun." He chuckled at the memories. "Took a gang to the Joe Louis fight in Philadelphia. Got down all right. No trouble with traffic cops. Gave a box of Corona Coronas to every cop we passed

from Times Square to the arena." He laughed. "Had to come back by train, though. The bearings burned out before we got out of Philly. Say, speaking of parties, how's for coming along with us Saturday. Taking a gang to the Harvard-Yale game at New Haven. Love to have you and your wife aboard."

That was how Pat and I came to be guests on our own Clipper. The sensation was marvelous. The "gang" was young and carefree. Lex had chosen the best-looking women and the funniest men in movie and café society.

I sat happily on the flying bridge, with Lili Damita at my side and a glass of Lex's champagne in my hand. I heard Pat's gay laughter ring up from the lounge. This was the life. Let someone else worry when tires blow. At each fast curve there was a crash in the galley where Lex's bottles of champagne, Scotch and brandy were piled along the sink. After a particularly heavy crash, while the broken bottles were still rolling on the floor, Horace's bewildered face appeared at the galley door. From habit, he looked first toward me, then turned to his new employer.

"Nearly a dozen bottles of champagne," Horace announced sadly, "got smashed when we took that turn."

"So what?" Lex replied, with a laugh. "Just open another case, Horace old boy!"

It was the best trip Pat and I ever took on the Clipper.





## Chapter 22

### JALOPY JUNK YARD

**A**FTER THOMPSON'S CHARTER expired, everything about the Clipper seemed stale by comparison. I had learned something. There was nothing wrong with the Clipper that money couldn't fix. It was merely too rich for Pat's blood pressure and my bank balance. What it needed was lots of Lex. Perhaps it wanted what every white elephant wants—a maharaja.

It looked as if the time had come to test Mr. Immergut's prediction regarding the resale value. He had come to this conclusion himself and was carefully checking the income tax laws covering deductions for loss on personal property used partly for business.

Having made up my mind to sell the Clipper, I felt like



a new man. No more exploding tires, no more bouncing beds, no more yammering crowds. It takes an experience like this, I decided, to make a man appreciate the virtues of a settled life.

The Clipper represented an investment of around \$20,000, exclusive of duebills. That included the Hungarian goose liver and several sets of air mattresses. Against that I offset the \$6,000 I had realized in charter fees. To make the sale easy, I decided to ask only \$14,000. That would put me right back where I started—with 20,000 miles of luxury travel as a bonus. In my imagination I saw some wealthy sportsman grabbing this chance to get our land yacht at a bargain. I felt sure the automobile and the trailer dealers of Greater New York would outbid each other for the privilege of handling the transaction.

Feeling like John D. Rockefeller passing out dimes, I got in touch with the car dealers along automobile row. Not one of them had ever heard of the Clipper. They were equally disinterested. The "Sitz Krieg" was well under way.

"Haven't you heard?" they asked me. "There's a war going on. We might even get mixed up in it ourselves. And that means gas rationing. Your rig's just the thing to be stuck with on three gallons a week."

The next day I called on the trailer lots. Some of them had heard of the Clipper. They didn't tell me what they had heard. But they muttered something about possible tire rationing. When I told them my asking price, they laughed in my face.

"People want trailers to live in," they explained pa-

tiently. "Not to go gadding about the country with a crew of three."

In despair we drove the Clipper to out-of-town dealers. One of them offered me \$375.

"That's just for the truck," he added magnanimously. "You can keep the trailer. Nobody'd be fool enough to buy a thing like that." When he saw my disappointment, he cheered me up. "Well, maybe, it'll junk for a couple hundred."

That night I sat down to think. Here was I, a so-called salesman. I professed to believe in the power of advertising. Why didn't I try my own medicine and advertise the Clipper!

Next day, in my office, I designed an eye-catching ad and called up *Fortune* magazine to reserve a page in the next available issue. Their advertising department informed me that a full page would cost \$2,000.

"How much do you get for a half-page?"

"\$1,150."

"Save me two inches in your next edition."

My engraver made a fine-screen half-tone of the Clipper, viewed at full length. It lost some of its glamour in the two inch reproduction. "CUSTOM BUILT LAND YACHT FOR SALE" read the bold face type over the picture. Below were miniature interior views. The text, in small type, gave details, among them the \$14,000 price. When the proofs came back they looked so exciting I wanted to buy it myself.

My ad appeared about six weeks later. Impatiently I waited for prospects. I didn't intend to sell to just any-

body. I wanted the Clipper to find an owner worthy of it. Every time the phone rang I jumped. But nobody phoned for the Clipper. I met the mailman three times a day at the door of my office. Nobody answered the ad.

Months passed. I couldn't understand it. More months passed. The issue of *Fortune* that carried my ad was so old that even the dentists had cleared it off their waiting room tables.

I decided to try another approach. I called up an organization named "Lists, Unlimited."

I asked, "Do you have a mailing list of millionaires in Greater New York?"

"Sure do."

"How much does it cost?"

"Twenty-five dollars per thousand."

"How many millionaires are there in New York, anyway?"

"13,321."

My heart sank. To send a good letter and pictures to that list would cost \$2,000. I decided to make a test mailing. I bought the first five hundred names—Abernathy to Bellfontaine—and mailed each a Hoovenized letter that looked like hand-typing and contained pictures of the Clipper looking its Sunday best.

From the five hundred millionaires I received just three replies. One came from a Fifth Avenue mansion whose owner was furious at having his privacy invaded. He wanted to know where I got his name and address, and threatened to turn the whole matter over to his attorneys.

The second reply came from a twelve-year-old boy who



urged me to take his Boy Scout troop for a trip in the Clipper.

The last reply came from Augustus Busch, Jr., the beer baron. Mr. Busch was willing to inspect the Clipper and an appointment was made for him to see it. Cautiously I sidestepped the suggestion of a trial run, explaining that our driver was away. I set the appointment three days ahead. This gave us time to have slip-covers made to conceal the tears and scratches. While Pat and Horace scrubbed the interior, I worked on the Kohler generator. The Clipper didn't have to move, but the lights had to light.

When Augustus Busch, Jr. arrived at the parking lot on Ninety-first Street he was accompanied by a thin, tall man with a Prussian haircut and thick glasses, whose stern visage reminded me of Mr. Immergut.

While his companion examined the truck minutely and crawled beneath the trailer to inspect the springs and brakes, Mr. Busch looked over the interior. He seemed to like everything on board. Particularly my choice of beer, which was "Michelob."

"Your taste in trailers is only equalled by your taste in brews," Mr. Busch remarked, as he raised the foaming mug to his lips. Horace had served the mugs, freshly drawn from the small keg in the galley.

I admitted my partiality to draft beer. "I always drink yours," I confessed. "'Michelob' when I can get it, 'Budweiser' when I can't."

Under the foam of my flattery, Mr. Busch confessed



that he liked the Clipper and would buy it on two conditions.

"What are they?" I asked him.

"First, that you sell it for \$6,000. That's all I care to spend."

My face fell but I asked him, "What's the other?"

"The recommendation of my German engineer."

"I'll answer your first condition after you get the second."

The Busch engineer was a very thorough man. We had time to do justice to the small keg of "Michelob" before he crawled out from under the Clipper. When he presented Mr. Busch with a black leather book full of notes in neat Germanic script, I withdrew and left them alone to consult. From outside I could see them sitting side by side on the lounge while the engineer shook his long finger and Busch shook his head. I had the Cord unparked and the motor running by the time Busch came out to break the news.

"You don't need to answer my first condition," he said, as he stood at the window of the Cord and goodnaturedly squeezed my arm. "My engineer's saved you the trouble."

I drove home to share the bad news with Pat who was waiting to hear the outcome.

"It looks like the junk yard for our dream boat," I announced dejectedly. The thought of callous wreckers ripping off our lovely tufted pigskin was almost too much to bear.

But Pat refused to let me give up hope. "The parking lot's paid for until the end of the year. And so is the insurance. Let's wait, at least, until after Christmas."

"Okay," I agreed. "But if there's no sale by then, it's off to the boneyard."

The deadline drew nearer and only one glimmer of hope appeared on the horizon. A fourth answer came from my millionaires. A dignified elderly gentleman called and requested to be shown the Clipper. His grey spats and white piped vest looked promising. But when he saw it he shook his head.

"Young man," he said, waving his gold-headed cane, "I have a fishing lodge in Maine, a shooting box in Scotland, an island of my own in the Florida Keys." He paused while that sank in. "But I'll be damned if I can afford *this* thing!"



## Chapter 23

### IT LOOKS BETTER IN THE DARK

**I**N THE EXCITEMENT of Pearl Harbor and America's entry into the war I forgot that I owned a white elephant. Pat was packing again; but this time our trip had a grimmer purpose. We were to leave the first of the year for Washington, where I had been offered a Lieutenant Commander's commission in the Naval Reserve.

"Call on line two for you, Mr. Zobel. It's a man who says he wants to buy the Clipper."

"Are you the man who advertised the trailer for sale in *Fortune* last May?"

"Yes."

"Still available?"

So many false alarms had been sounded that I had

given up hope. I might as well play hard to get. "I have a couple of good offers I am considering. Better call me the end of the week."

"I have to see it right away."

The urgency in his voice commanded my interest. I thought fast. The Clipper had been sitting in an open car lot for nearly a year. It surely would be a mess. Probably there was no air in the tires. Perhaps no tires.

"Well, when?" I began.

"This afternoon," the voice stated firmly.

"All right. Meet me at the parking lot at Ninety-first and Broadway, at six o'clock." I glanced at my watch. It would be dark by six. The Clipper would look better in the dark.

It was 2 P.M. That left four hours to get Horace up to Ninety-first Street with cleaning materials and fresh stocks for the bar. Oh, Kohler generator, generate. Oh, heaters, heat; lights, light and gadgets gadgel!

My prayers were answered. It grew dark outside; but the gleaming lights from within made the Clipper look like a night-time Pullman diner—vibrant, exotic and alluring.

Horace, distinguished looking in a freshly pressed uniform, had slices of orange and lemon laid out, with maraschino cherries and bitters. A bottle of bonded Bourbon stood on the bar. The ice cubes came forth like magic. I turned on the automatic record player and sweet music filled the Clipper. No siren of the silent movies ever sprayed her lair with more seduction. Surveying the scene, I felt again that old urge to hit the highway.



My prospect arrived on the dot of six. He was a small intense man with movements that were quick and bird-like. His keen, flashing eyes took in the whole interior at a glance. Waving aside my proffered old-fashioned without comment, he started, at a jog trot, on a running tour of the Clipper. I couldn't keep up with him. The bath door banged, the galley door slid open and shut, but he moved quicker than the eye could follow. I heard him testing the water pressure in the galley, inspecting the cupboards and slamming the refrigerator door. Then he flashed past me and up to the flying bridge to check the instruments. The whole inspection tour took two minutes.

"I'll buy it," he announced. They were his first words to me.

My reaction was one of annoyance. The man must be mad. Maybe he thought he was Napoleon Bonaparte.

"You haven't even looked at the truck."

"My client doesn't care what the truck looks like."

"Then you're not buying it for yourself?"

"No."

"Does your client know how much it costs?"

"He probably saw the price in your ad. But," he added grandly, "that's quite unimportant."

Now I was convinced he was a phony. Fourteen thousand dollars not important! I suggested, with some heat, that his client take a look for himself.

"That is impossible. He is out of town."

"When will he be back?"

"Never. He lives abroad. In fact he's never been to the U.S. And never intends to come."

The enormity of this situation was too much. Was I supposed to believe that a man wanted to buy our Clipper and never expected to come here to use it!

"I will *ship* the Clipper to my client," the mysterious little man explained.

"He's a foreign shipowner, then?"

He smiled. "In a way."

I decided to end this pointless game of "Twenty Questions." How about a deposit to bind your purchase? Say \$2,000."

My baffling prospect whipped out his checkbook and wrote a check for that amount. Before the ink was dry, he delivered his instructions.

"The air-conditioned wine cellar and bar come out."

I was convinced that the man was mad and his check was rubber, so I only fought half-heartedly against this heresy.

"Everybody wants a bar," I explained patiently. "I am sure your client will want one too."

"My client does not drink."

"Some of his friends may want a snort now and then."

His face twitched at the suggestion. "My client does not drink and his friends won't want a 'snort' either!"

Must have pretty dull parties, I thought to myself. *Life* would not be interested.

My prospect issued further orders. "The two-way radio is to be re-installed."

"Why? Is your client a ham?"

"Not exactly," he smiled.

"It doesn't matter. I couldn't put it back anyway. I

took it out when we entered the war. All amateur transmissions are prohibited."

"Who prohibits them?"

"The Federal Communications Commission." I breathed those four words in the hushed tones hams reserve for this awesome body.

The little man waved the prohibition aside with a disdainful gesture.

"The transmitter goes back in. My client has his own Federal Communications Commission."

Thereafter I offered no further opposition to his suggestions, no matter how much they jarred me. It was obvious that this man—who said his name was Hammer—was either unreasonable or crazy or both. Why argue, since his check was certainly going to bounce.

I presented it next morning, with apologies, to the vice-president of my bank. "Undoubtedly phony," I said. "Brought it in to save you the trouble of sending it back."

He looked at the signature. "Good as gold," he assured me. "Hammer owns the Hammer Galleries. Sold the treasures of the Russian Czar. Also the Hearst collection. This check's on a special fund some customer set up for him. Even with three more zeros we'd honor it."

I rushed home to tell Pat.

The following weeks were busy. Hammer called daily to order extensive and expensive alterations. The new owner had cabled that he wanted the bathroom fixtures gold-plated. In place of the bar and wine cellar a safe must be installed. Then came an order for a larger motor in the truck. Next was a call for complete re-upholstering



in silk damask, refinishing of all interior woodwork, exterior repainting, two new sets of tires and twenty new and bigger batteries.

To cover these directives came a rain of checks, all cheerfully accepted by my bank. But our efforts to pump Hammer for information failed utterly. He could have made Calvin Coolidge sound like a chatterbox.

The last cable demanded that I dictate complete details covering the operation of everything, to be shipped via air mail, together with all instruction manuals. The Clipper itself was to follow by fast boat, with metal greased to prevent corrosion and interior padded with cotton wool. The entire truck and trailer were ordered packed in specially constructed wooden crates.

"Put it in a box," sang Pat, "tie it with a ribbon and throw it in the deep blue sea."

"Can you think of anything else?" I asked Hammer's secretary, when I finished the required two solid hours of dictation.

I caught her off guard. "How in heck are they going to get those enormous crates from the dock in Alexandria to the Abdin Palace in Cairo?"

Shades of King Tut! We'd sold our Clipper to King Farouk of Egypt!

It is typical of me that I can never leave well enough alone. Now that I knew who the new owner was, I had to know how the King liked his new royal chariot. How was his regal digestion after the first twenty tires blew out? From anyone we knew going to Egypt we begged



for information. But they all came back to report that no one over there even knew what a trailer was, much less whether or not the King owned one.

One day, a year later, on a weekend leave from the Navy, I was entering Toot Shor's New York restaurant when I spied Larry Thaw. He was sitting alone by the entrance, in the seat of honor on the number one banquette. I started to pass without speaking, but Thaw hailed me.

"I say, old boy," he cried in crisp tones of command, for he now wore the uniform of a Colonel of the Quartermaster General's staff and I was in civvies. "I thought it might interest you to know what happened to my caravan." His guardsman's mustachios bristled fiercely.

I nodded.

"Well," said Thaw, watching my face, "I sold it. And guess to whom?"

I shook my head. "I give up."

"To none other," Thaw cleared his throat impressively, "than his Princely Highness, the Gaekwar of Baroda."

"Congratulations."

"By the bye," Thaw asked with obvious disinterest, "did you ever get rid of that thing of yours?"

"It's nice of you to ask me. As a matter of fact, I did."

"Not to a Prince, I'll wager." Thaw chuckled at the absurdity.

"Well, not exactly."

"Whomever *did* you stick with it?"

"Oh, no one you'd know," I told him, "just the King of Egypt."



Epilogue

SAFARI

**O**N NEW YEAR'S EVE of 1952 our story ends in Cairo. Pat and I were on our way around the world and had reached Egypt, determined not to leave until our search for the Clipper was ended. We inquired through the American embassy, the Tourist Police and all the travel agencies. We were baffled by the inscrutability of the East. Finally, at Cook's, I found the dragoman of my dreams. He knew Cairo like the palm of his hand—when that palm was crossed with silver. He was more than a guide. He was the Egyptian equivalent of a Pinkerton detective.

For days Hamid and Pat and I snooped after the Clipper like the bloodhounds after Eliza. At last, we cornered a guard at the Abdin palace. The interview was con-

ducted by Hamid who translated my questions into Arabic.

"Does the King own a caravan?"

The guard shook his head.

"Do you know what a caravan is?"

The guard shook his head.

"Do you know the location of the royal garage?"

The guard still stood at parade rest, feet wide apart and rifle with fixed bayonet extended before him, butt between his feet. But he moved his eyes to a point inside the gate. We could see the garage within the palace enclosure and, to our surprise, he let us enter.

The Abdin palace garage covered a square city block and was filled from wall to wall with a sea of bright red Cadillacs. Through Hamid we met the Chief Royal Chauffeur, who spoke English. This was just the Abdin palace garage, he explained. There were eleven other palaces throughout Egypt and eleven other royal garages. Each of them was filled with Cadillacs painted fire-engine red. Moreover the King was currently touring Europe in an additional fleet of eighteen red Cadillacs. This, of course, must have been very gratifying to the Cadillac Company, but it left us cold. For nowhere in that red sea of Cadillacs could we discern the Clipper.

Discouraged, we turned back to the chauffeur. "Does the King have any conveyances other than red Cadillacs?"

"Yes."

"Did he ever have a caravan?"

"Yes."

"Does he have a caravan now?"

"Yes."

"Where is this caravan?"

"It is in the palace garage at Alexandria, over a hundred miles away."

Our eyes lit up like children's eyes on Christmas morning. Now we were getting somewhere.

"Can you tell me what sort of vehicle pulls the King's caravan?"

The Royal Chauffeur made a sweep with his arm like the curve of a cab-over-engine. "It is what you say American Chev-row-lay."

"Does the King have any special trouble with his caravan?"

"No trouble much. But when His Majesty first buy caravan and take Queen Farida on wedding trip to Lake Fayum many tires go bang."

Pat and I broke into uncontrollable laughter. The hysterical sounds rolled through the stately silence of the King's garage.

We cried in unison, "That's our Clipper!"

My story is now told. The Clipper is at pasture in a special garage in Alexandria, built to fit it and it alone, so that it need not mingle with lesser Cadillacs. Four mechanics putter over it lovingly and without cease. An Italian engineer and an Egyptian decorator give it their entire and exclusive care. It is pampered as a royal white elephant deserves to be pampered. Each year its upholstery is changed and its interior decor refurbished. But its name—"The Cleeper"—which Pat and I gave it, clings to it still.



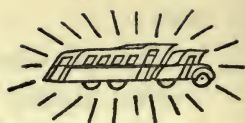
This was what we had come to Egypt to find out. With a warm feeling of contentment, we prepared to continue our journey and sail from Port Said right after the New Year. As a farewell party, friends in Cairo invited us to spend New Year's Eve at the Royal Automobile Club of Egypt. This seemed to us appropriate. Besides, as sponsor of the club, the King, newly returned from Europe, would be there.

The King was there, and in high good humor. He stopped to chat with friends throughout the room, puffing contently on a succession of tiny cigars, the size of cigarettes. Our hosts asked us if we wished to be presented.

Pat nudged me. "Go ahead," she urged. "He's laughing. Now is a good time to tell him the real story of the Clipper."

"What!" I exclaimed. "And ruin the party, and maybe have our exit visas cancelled?"

We sailed on the morning tide.



Addendum

JANUARY, 1955

**T**HREE YEARS have passed since the above lines were written. Farouk is no longer King. He lives in Rome—*sans* throne, *sans* wife, *sans* Clipper. But from the new rulers of Egypt I have just received this cryptic cable:

DISPOSING PERSONAL EFFECTS FAROUK INCLUDING CLIPPER. CABLE OFFER.

My answer is already filed with the cable office. It reads:

"ONCE IS ENOUGH. AN ELEPHANT NEVER FORGETS."













